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# THE SPIRIT OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

SERMONS PREACHED ON VARIOUS OCCASIONS

BY THE

REV. STOPFORD A. BROOKE, M.A.

*FIFTH EDITION*

LONDON

KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRÜBNER & CO. LTD.  
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## P R E F A C E.

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THE SERMONS published in this book have been in print for nearly a year, and were intended for much earlier publication ; but they were unavoidably delayed, and in the meantime I have left the Church of England. I could not withdraw the book, and indeed there is no need to do so. There is nothing in it with which I disagree. The sermons are practical, not doctrinal ; and my only anxiety in sending them forth now, is that they should not be taken as a statement of the reasons I had for leaving the Church of England.

STOPFORD A. BROOKE.

*September 20, 1880.*



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# SERMONS.

[February 15, 1874.]

## *THE AWAKENING OF ST. PETER.*

'When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.'—Luke v. 8.

THE Sea of Galilee and the hollowed hills that surround its shores have changed their climate, since the Saviour made them His favourite haunt. From the month of May till late in the year, to live there now is like living in a furnace, and those who feel the oppressive blaze cannot believe that the place was once the centre of a rich human activity. In the time of Christ, however, the population was large and varied; hundreds of fishing-boats were sprinkled over the lake; and in the villages and cities along its shores, crowds of men toiled and led their life, in the fisheries, in commerce, and in the court at Tiberias.

The cause of this change of climate is the destruction of the abundant vegetation that once clothed the shores of this inland sea. It is often a day's journey now to find shade for the encampment; but then, we are told by the Jewish historian, that plants and flowers, equally

from cold and torrid lands, brought forth all through the year, leaves, fruits, and blossoms plenteously. He calls the climate temperate ; and it probably resembled that of the Lake of Como.

Waves of war have since constantly swept over it, and the ruin of its vegetation, in altering the climate, has banished the population. The lake as well as the land is deserted. Perhaps at times a single barque is seen, the solitary representative of the fishing-fleets and pleasure-boats of old. But the waters and the shore are lovely still. The sea, blue and translucent, breaks on a white beach of shells, or flows into creeks where the grass and flowers dip into the water, and the tamarisk stands among oleanders in the golden haze. The lake is covered with flocks of water-fowl, and is still to-day the favoured haunt of fish. Low grassy hills look down upon its surface, and, far to the north, the snowy peak of Hermon cuts the sapphire sky.

The landscape was different in which Christ and Peter met at first. It was in the wilderness where John was baptising, near Jordan, on whose banks waved the jungle reed in the wind which Christ alluded to in speaking of John ; a waste and austere country, only brightened by the rushing of the river : and the contrast between this grave picture and that of the sea of Gennesareth illustrates, in nature's unconscious poetry, the contrast between the two lives and the two teachings of Christ and the Baptist. In this country John was teaching ; and with him on a certain day were two Galilean fishers, John and Andrew. As they walked together, John saw in the distance Jesus, whom nearly

two months before he had baptised, and looking on Him as He walked, he said, 'Behold the Lamb of God.'

Then the two future Apostles left John and spoke with Jesus. They walked and supped with Him, and Andrew, thrilled and charmed in his inmost spirit, sought out his brother Peter, and brought him next morning to the Saviour. 'We have found the Messias,' he said; 'come and see.' It is a homelike, pastoral story, and round it gathers all the sweetness of the common human world, all the neglected tenderness of daily life. The afternoon walk, the evening meal, the social talk, the morning search of the eager brothers knit together in the natural piety of affection; the newborn enthusiasm in their hearts as they met the Saviour in the fields—and all these mingled with *our* thought of the mighty work hidden in the future of the men—are the best possible commentary on the after words of Christ: 'The kingdom of God cometh not with outward shew.'

Our task to-day is to trace the awakening of the soul of Peter under the influence of Christ, and I connect with the first touch of this the thought of the penetrative power of Christ. He had not talked long with Peter before He saw into the heart of his character. 'Thou shalt be called Cephas, the rock.' He saw in the unpretending fisherman the man of rock—the stern, uncompromising soldier-heart, the firm-founded soul on which He could build His Church. We know how true that vision was, we who have seen the Apostle stand before the Sanhedrim and say, 'We must obey God rather than men;' but Christ's insight is the more remarkable, because this firmness did not at all lie on the surface

of Peter's character, nor was it developed till afterwards. The element which lay on the surface was impulsiveness, and it was so quickly shown that even in a short interview it must have betrayed itself. A man of the world would have formed the very opposite judgment to that which Christ formed. He would have said, 'There is but little dependence to be placed on this man; he acts by impulse, he will be liable to be the slave of circumstance, he cannot be a certain friend'—and such a judgment would not have been wrong, for Peter did fail in all these things: he had all the evils of an impulsive character. The quite curious thing is that Christ at once saw beyond all this: saw the faults, but saw the excellence of which the faults were the excess; pierced beyond them to the root; and, contrary to everything we should have expected (though any one who has lived much has often found out that impulsiveness and faithfulness go together), declared the Apostle to be a man of rock. We find strength and faithfulness in men after long trial; Christ saw immediately all the capabilities of the new soul that touched His own.

That is the penetrative power of Christ, and it was an essentially human power. It was not His in virtue of a divine nature; it was the direct result of that perfect humanity in Him, which found its true life in throwing itself out of itself into union with every other life it met; it is the same power by which great artists are great—the natural power of sympathy arising from the habit of self-forgetfulness. It is the power of always becoming another person at any moment, and feeling, not what we, but what others are. And Christ, being

absolutely unselfish, had this power as no other man has had it in this world. It follows that not only was He able to comprehend persons, but also the whole range of human nature in its entirety. Look at the history of His doings with Zacchæus, with Nathanael, with the Magdalen, with those who came to entangle Him in His speech, with the hypocrite, with good and with bad—then listen to the words He spoke to the whole of human nature, mark the intensity and the universality of phrases which fit our life now, as they fitted life then—phrases which have no national or class peculiarities, and belong to the heart of the race—and you cannot but be conscious of the power, at its very highest development, of human insight into personal and universal mankind.

The same power God uses now; we know thus, through Christ, that God understands us. And, knowing what He is, it is inexpressible comfort to feel that there is One who knows us through and through. We shrink from baring our inner life to men; we hate ourselves when we have been betrayed into self-revelation; it is the sadness of friendship that we are lured to give too much, for we know that men never can comprehend all, that they have not the universality needed to balance what is weak and strong, good and evil. We may not wear our heart upon our sleeve, because we know that there are daws who will peck at it: because even those dearest to us often turn into weapons against us the secrets which we have betrayed of our inner life. But we feel we *can* entrust the task of judgment to the infinite justice and infinite

love of God. He is not jealous, or easily angered, or envious, or carping, or unjust because of personal pique. He does not leap to conclusions on the strength of a moment of anger or a hasty speech, or judge us by a single letter, or condemn us, unforgivingly, for a single fault. He sees not only what we are, but what we may become. He knows our faults and sins, but He can see the good qualities and powers of which they are the shadow. He understands that when our sins are conquered, they may become the stepping-stones to a better life.

It is at once the blessedness and the awfulness of life to feel that God is in our very heart, moving there, examining and knowing all; to give up all into His hands, those hands so divinely, exquisitely just, and ask Him to redeem us, to make us, by the power of His spirit, pure; to kindle all our good into immortal life, to burn up all our evil, to make us at last into His ideal of our character, to make us—so bitterly conscious of our imperfection—into perfect men and women.

It was something of this that Peter felt, and he had time to think over it. After that interview near Jordan he went home to his daily work. The words Christ had spoken to him were allowed to sink deep into his heart; there was a pause in life before the next impression was made upon him. It was wise economy. For we are often too greedy of new thought, and take in more than we can assimilate; and the consequence is sickness of soul. Or we give too much to a willing disciple or child, and lose our labour from over-haste. Christ did not make this

mistake : He waited, and made His scholar wait ; He knew that the great changes of life are slow.

And Peter went away to reflect on what he had heard and felt. It was wonderful to him ; for the first time in his life the unlearned fisherman had been recognised by one far greater than himself. Without pride, without exclusiveness, the very Messiah had spoken to him as man to man, and revealed to him a higher self, a higher aim, than he could have of himself conceived. For the first time a greater reverence, and with it a greater love than he had ever given to man, were growing in his soul ; and in the deepening of these things within him, given as they were by One whom he felt to be as pure and noble as He was great, his whole nature expanded. For it is in the warm air of high emotion that the soul unfolds its powers. And with it all, there was an unselfish, personal pleasure (unselfish, for with it was linked intense humility) ; for he had met One who had seen into him, and seen not only that which his fellow-fishers saw—courage, impulsiveness, weakness in trial—but also strength, power of supporting others, power of endurance, power to conquer failure. It exalted his whole nature to have talked with one who had seen that he was worth much in the world.

If you have ever met anyone who has so stirred you in life, who has given you a character to reverence, kindled in you a great love, spoken to you as a friend, seen in you the materials of greatness, pierced below the surface faults to the centre of your character, and asked you to trust and live for its goodness ; made you

humbler and yet more self-confident, given you hope and faith in yourself and God—then you may imagine in some degree what were the thoughts of St. Peter as he lay at night within his boat, rocked on the indolent surge of the lake, letting his thoughts wander with his eyes among the stars, and hearing nothing but the cry of the wild fowl in the water, and the rustle of the oleander on the shore—

Such sounds as make deep silence in the heart  
For God to do His part.

And amid the stillness God was at work upon his heart ; and all things in the loneliness spoke to him ; and again and again the impressive image of the Saviour visited him, and the words of Christ were in his ears ; till the one longing of his soul was this : ‘ Shall I meet Jesus once again, or will He forget me in the greatness of His work ? ’

¶ And one fair morning, as he sat on the glittering beach of shells, mending his nets, his desire was answered. Christ stood before him and confirmed His friendship. It was done with tender delicacy. He put Himself under an obligation to Peter. ~~He~~ <sup>He</sup> asked permission to speak to the people from the fishing-boat. He begged as a favour what Peter would have given Him as a right. These are the fine courtesies of feeling which make the taste of life so sweet to both giver and receiver. It delights us to find them in the perfect man ; it gives them a new impulse in us—for how we do neglect them in friendship ; and how much in neglecting them we lose ! ]

We now come to the second scene in this dramatic movement between St. Peter and Jesus.

By all that Peter had gone through there had been kindled in his soul the first sparks of love to Christ, fitly mingled with veneration. But as yet there had been no spiritual element connected with them, and Christ's object was to waken more than friendship. The way had been prepared, but Peter had not yet passed over the threshold of the spiritual life; he had not felt his sinfulness, his need of a Saviour; his self-weakness, his need of divine strength. He loved, he reverenced, he believed; but he had not linked his love and reverence and faith to any profound feeling such as knits the forgiven sinner to a forgiving Father. And it is in what now took place, in the awakening of the slumbering forces of the spirit, that Peter was lifted into another and a higher, though a more sorrowful and more tempted life.

Before we enter on the consideration of this, observe Christ's method. Before He made Peter think himself nothing He had first made him feel himself something. He had praised him, exalted him in his own eyes, stirred in him energy, given him hope. Our method is often the reverse of this; we meet a man and tell him he is a miserable sinner in the eyes of God. We wake, in this way, his anger, we quench his aspiration, we drive him to despair or obstinacy. How different would it be with him did we tell him that he is God's child, the possessor of lofty capabilities, the heir of goodness, better and nobler than he thinks! We should kindle his hopes, lead him to strive to be that which he is

not yet, and bring him to gaze on Christ the perfect man. Then, having come into contact with Christ, he will find out for himself, as Peter did, that he is a sinner. You cannot convince him of that from without; he must learn it himself from Christ in his heart.

‘Launch out into the deep,’ Christ said. ‘Let down your nets.’ A little later and Peter would have obeyed at once; but as yet he had not much faith, and he answered, ‘Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing; nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.’ And straightway, we are told, they enclosed a multitude of fishes; and Peter, seeing the wonder, was smitten to the heart; he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, ‘Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord!’ It seems a strange conclusion, a strange way to create that deep, spiritual connection between Christ and the Apostle which was needed. But who can tell how things work, and when one like Christ is present, pouring on everything the intense power of His personality, and through everything touching the heart, we need not ask why this was so.

Moreover, there had been some previous preparation. His soul was all awake, waiting for he knew not what; the sermon of Christ from the boat had stirred him more deeply; he had felt, be sure, as Christ spoke, some sense of the infinite distance between his life and that of Christ’s; some feeling of his own poverty of being—and now he was moved to his centre with humbleness and love; for if the first touch of Christ, as we have seen, produces aspiration and hope in our nature, the second shows us perfection, and produces a sense of

want, a sense of sinfulness. The wonder on the lake, coming to a man so thrilling with emotion, and who saw in it a miracle, strengthened this feeling. We can only explain its strange effect by supposing something like that I have described as being in St. Peter's mind. Otherwise the result seems inexplicable. The result we should have predicted would have been astonishment followed by gratitude. The quite unexpected conclusion was a conviction of sin. Peter, looking through all the events he had met with Christ, and through all the feelings in his own heart, saw now—by one of those curious intuitions which leap over all outward considerations to the very inmost meaning of an event in life—the end to which he had been led, the conviction of the holiness of Christ and his own want of it; and in that conviction he was born into a new life.

— In such a nature, emotion of this kind will leap at once into expression; and Peter's expression of it reveals one of those states of mingled feelings which seem too strange to be understood, but which we feel to be true to our human nature. It was a mixture of repulsion and attraction, of fear that repelled, of love that drew. ‘Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord!—that was the cry of his lips, and it rose half out of fear at the revelation of holiness, half out of shame at the revelation of his own sinfulness. But with this was something more. His fear and shame sprang out of his lower self; but he could not remain in fear or shame with that wonderful and tender face looking down upon him, as he knelt among the nets. His

higher being rose in passion to meet the encouragement of Christ. That which was akin to Christ in him saw and recognised with joy—joy that took then the garments of a noble sorrow, the beauty of holiness in Christ; remembered that this holiness had come to meet him, sought him out and loved him—and at the thought, all his nobler nature darted forward with a cry, repelled the lower that would have exiled Christ through fear, denied the words on his lips so far as fear was in them, and threw him down, forgetting all else in utter love and broken-hearted humbleness, at the feet of Christ.

‘Depart from me—no, never, my Lord and Master, never leave me. There in Thy holiness can I alone find rest; in being with Thee always alone salvation from my wrongdoing; in loving Thee with all my heart alone the strength I need to conquer fear, and passionate impulse, and weakness in the hour of trial.’

Yes, that is the great step which takes us over the threshold into the temple of a spiritual life with God. We have met the Saviour on the way, and felt a new aspiration and a new hope. We begin to think of a better life; much of the world and its meaner interests decays in us; we breathe a new atmosphere. But we are not yet touched home. We only muse at times, like Peter on the lake, on the beauty of a nobler struggle; we have not realised that vital union with God in which prayer becomes a necessity, and a holy life an active aspiration. But some new event, or some unexpected touch of feeling brings Christ again to our side, not as before in joy, but in the wonder and glory of holiness. Then comes that conviction of sinfulness

which is no mere theological term, but the most real crisis of the life of man. For the first time we are startled, as we see how awful is the life of purity, how miserably unlike it is our life. At the revelation we veil our faces in dismay, and are at first repelled; but our heart has been opened, and the fear is succeeded by love. An inexpressible desire and passion to be like the image of God in Christ, to know God, to claim His righteousness as ours, to fall at His feet and feel the rain of His forgiveness on our heart, seizes on us—and behold! we are new men; knit, we feel, to the Saviour of our being for ever and ever. It is thus that personal union begins, which, ever becoming closer, develops more and more the true life of the soul, and deepens through the experience of manhood into the serene calm of old age—waiting, with a wondrous hope in its eyes, for the final revelation of light and life that is hidden for us with Christ in God.

And the life which succeeds that revelation of holiness and sin is no life of mere feeling. ‘Follow me,’ said Christ, ‘and I will make you a fisher of men;’ and Peter left all and followed Him. ~~This part of~~ The story does not tell us to throw aside our daily work, unless it should happen that we have a special apostolic call, but it does tell us to change our motives, our ideas, our aims; to live the life of Christ, the life that gives up life to others. In vain in other lives have we sought for peace in Truth. We have sought truth in beauty, and shuddered to find beneath beauty the horror of sensuality; we have sought it in philosophy, and have felt the heart grow chill in the atmosphere of

abstract thought ; we have sought it in knowledge, and the answer is the conviction of our ignorance ; we have sought it in Nature, in her order and her beauty, and we find ourselves prisoners of necessity ; and when we hoped to win from her a sympathy which should give us joy at last—the answer she gives us in the end is this : ‘Thou resemblest the spirit whom thou comprehendest—not me.’ We have toiled all the night and taken nothing ; and now we sit on the shore of life, hopelessly mending our broken nets.

Then Christ comes by and asks us to try again. ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.’ Launch out into the deep of the sea of humanity, and bring by self-devotion to light and to life the drowned souls that lie therein. In your house, in your political and social life, in your business and trade and work, seek and save and help your brothers ; love and sympathise with them. Think of mankind and not of self.

It will be strange then, if lost in this work, and living in the spirit of Jesus, the lover of men, you do not see ere long the august and lovely face of the truth unveiling itself to you, the truth whose possession brings rest at last, the rest of a soul at one with eternal love.

It is with deep meaning that the poet makes his incarnation of humanity never able to say to the passing moment, ‘Stay, thou art fair,’ till he saw from his castle his subjects happy on the lands he had reclaimed. It is with profounder meaning still that Christ makes the judgment at the last depend on that which men had done or not done for their brethren, that He lays down the vital truth of Christianity—that the service of man is the service of God.

[February 22, 1874.]

*THE LAST SCENE WITH PETER.<sup>1</sup>*

• So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.'—St. John xxi. 15.

IN this last scene of the dramatic movement between the characters of Christ and St. Peter, we are again in Galilee by the lake. We should have thought that the Apostles would have remained in Jerusalem, haunting with sorrowful footsteps the places of the Passion; but it was Christ Himself who had sent them back to Galilee. They were to meet Him again, not in the noise of Jerusalem, but in the quietude of nature; not among the scenes where the later sorrows of His life were borne, but where the earlier happiness of His ministry had filled them all with joy. It is a beautiful touch of pure humanity, the expression of a poetic heart.

It is not wonderful that Christ appointed Galilee for their place of meeting Him again. Near it, before the sternness of life had made itself known, all His childhood had been passed. Near it, in the upland town of

<sup>1</sup> For the denial of St. Peter, see Sermons, first series.

Nazareth, the solemnity of His work had slowly dawned, then risen upon Him. It was there His freshest, tenderest, most poetical, yet most profound teaching had been given. From the boats, the villages, the public ways around the lake, He had chosen nearly all His Apostles. There was scarcely a shelving beach of glittering sand, scarcely a retreating valley, scarcely a grassy hill that mirrored itself in the water, which He had not known as a place of healing, teaching, or solitary prayer ; He had lived on the waves of that inland water, and they had heard His voice. Its fields, its vineyards, flowers and hills and birds, had spoken to Him as man speaks to man, and He had used them in His work. Human hearts had bowed before His doctrine there as corn beneath the summer wind ; and far more joyfully than in the distempered atmosphere of Jerusalem His own heart had beaten there with the hearts of men. Therefore now, newborn from death, changed into the spiritual life, His first thought is to go back to the well-loved place, to meet His friends where first He met them, to recall the old life, the old emotion, that through them the new might take a deeper meaning.

I think that is beautiful ; and it is good news for us if Christ, as He was after death, represents what we shall be. For there are some places on earth so dear to us that even friends are not dearer, nor say more to us than they. There are spots of earth, where, alone with God, He has spoken to us through nature, and we have been more stirred with aspiration, with consciousness of our eternity and our high destiny, than we have ever been by man. These we may yet revisit and enter as we

enter a consecrated temple. There are other places upon earth, where we have lived with those we loved, so hallowed by the birth and growth of feeling that to see them after many years is to grow young again ; so beautiful that the memory of them will be the poetry of old age. Is it too much to say that we shall have power, as we shall have desire, to revisit these again and renew the days of old ? We too shall go again to Galilee.」

「 Thither then, with some of these emotions in their hearts, the Apostles of the lake had gone. What was Peter thinking of ? We shall better understand our text if we try to realise his thoughts ; and they are not hard to conjecture. He was back again in the midst of the old work, doing exactly that business which he had done some years before when Christ had come upon him and taken him away. And often and often, as he fished the lake, the whole three years must have seemed like a dream. Was it possible, he thought, he had ever left this place ; that he had gone through all that wonderful life ? Could it be true that he had done so much and suffered so bitterly ; that he had loved and betrayed, that he had companied with the Messiah and seen Him die ?」

The outward life was now the same as in his fisher-days ; it was as if nothing had passed. Yet he knew well that the inward life was not ; that he had passed through the greatest change a man can feel, that a very eternity of feeling had wandered over him. He looked back and saw the days of the Passion, and then utter depression fell upon him, when he remembered the ruin of all their hopes of the Kingdom, the death of the

King and the triumph of evil. And in the midst of his musing, came the deep remorse of love, the agonised recollection of the betrayal, the memory of the last forgiveness in the eyes of Christ as He passed him in the hall and heard his last denial. [It is only those who have lived and sorrowed for the best, and sinned against and been forgiven of the best, that can imagine the fiery pain which filled an impulsive heart like Peter's as he laboured now in Galilee. But now another tide of thought bore him away; a strange, wild hope, born of the resurrection, told him that all had not been lost upon the cross, that his love might have yet power to fulfil itself in action for Christ, that the Kingdom might yet be established, and that he might work for it; that there was before him not only the fisher-life in Galilee, but the life which of old had been promised him, the life of a fisher of men.]

Depression, love and hope then interchanged themselves within him, and with them, as their natural companion, was humility. He could not look back without seeing how all his impulsive affection had broken down, how all his boastfulness had failed. He had been called the man of rock, and he had felt that that ideal of his character was possible; but he had utterly failed in firmness, in love, and in trial. He had taken the lead always among the Apostles; but none had proved, in the hour of trial, save Judas, more unworthy than he to lead. And it was a bitter thought to him that Christ would not choose him now to guide or strengthen others. At last, then, he knew his own weakness and confessed his failure; and in this deep

lumility he could never boast again, never assume, as his self-confidence was wont to do, that he was certain of himself. He would not say now, 'Lord, I love Thee,' but 'Lord, *Thou* knowest that I love Thee.'

So prepared, he met Christ for the last time by the lake. He and his brethren had passed the whole night, fishing in vain. They could not but recall another night, when, having taken nothing, they met Christ next morning. And when Peter recollected it, as he was sure to do, all his long life with Jesus in a moment would rush back upon him, and fill him to the brim. Instantly then all the thoughts he had had since his return to Galilee, rose to intensity in him. As he sat silent, the golden dawn filled the sky, and through the dim mist they heard a voice and saw a figure on the shore. It bade them cast on the right side of the ship, and they cast, and enclosed a great multitude of fishes. Then, as the sun leaped upwards, and the mists were dispersing, John of the eagle eye looked, and in the glowing light recognised his Master—'It is the Lord.' Quick then and glowing, sudden and upleaping as the sun, Peter's whole nature, with all its impulse set on fire by the passionate contemplation of the previous days, broke forth. Not waiting a moment, he leaped into the sea, and swimming, wading, rushing up the beach, he came to his Master; his whole life in his eyes, his whole being in his act.

The power of the man was in this impetuous rush; but the impulsiveness had now a different root than it had ever had before. You remember, when, seeing Christ on the water, the impulse drove Peter forth to

walk the water to meet Him : then it was faith and vanity, and the vanity spoilt the faith. The impulse of fear succeeded, and he sank. You remember, when Christ spoke of His death, the thoughtless impulse came upon Peter, to half reprove his Master : ' That be far from Thee, Lord '—then it was love and presumption. You remember, when, in his boastful mood, yet half touched by fear, his impulse drove him to smite with the sword when smiting was useless : then it was blind violence and dismay. But here, vanity, presumption, boastfulness, fear, and violence were dead—it was only love and humility that acted ; only the one passionate, unquestioning desire, without one thought of self in it, to bear witness to his affection, to ask and win forgiveness from his Master.

† The story tells of the morning meal that followed, in the broad sunlight. With fresh winds and waters round them, they seemed to eat and drink together. It is not too fanciful to think that they recalled the last evening meal they had taken together, when Christ had blest the bread before His suffering.

How different it was now ! Instead of night, the morning ; instead of dusky Jerusalem, and the furious mob, the bright lake and hills, the little group of friends ; instead of the shadow of death, the glow of resurrection beauty on the face of Christ. The night had departed—the morning had come ; the night of His absence, the morning with His presence. And, in poetic thought, the whole scene may image well the death and resurrection of the Apostles' hearts ; the death of the old life in which they could take nothing ; the birth

of the new life in and for the Saviour, when they were to go forth as His Apostles and to bring into the net of the Gospel a thousand thousand souls. ]

Then it was that Christ spoke to Peter. Everyone has felt that the threefold question alluded to the three-fold betrayal. And in the realm of inner thought the scene led up to this questioning ; for, as I said, when now again Peter ate with Jesus, he could not have helped thinking of the last supper ; and as he thought of that time, the things that followed it must have come upon his soul. He heard himself say, ‘ Though I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee in anywise.’ He went with himself through the sleep in the garden, the house of the High Priest, the challenge of the servants, the thrice-repeated denial, the crowing of the cock, the reproachful glance of Christ, the bitter weeping in the morning. And as, with all this in his eyes, he looked up at Christ, it was but in answer to his own hidden thoughts that he heard the question come : ‘ Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these ? ’ He could not mistake the allusion—‘ more than these ’ —to that last speech that preceded his treachery when he said, ‘ Though all should be offended, yet will not I.’ There lay hid then in the question a mild rebuke, so exquisitely given that it would not sting but soften the heart. ]

It was a trial also ; it was so spoken as to try whether the Apostle had the same boastful spirit. ‘ Would he now exalt himself, put himself forward as the first ; was the element of self-conceit still mingled with his impulsive affection ? ’

We see in the reply how the Apostle was changed. He accepted the reproof without a word of self-justification. In that way of boasting, at least, he would never sin again. He answered true to the testing power of the words on his heart; he did not even trust his own knowledge of his love, but appealed from himself to Christ. ‘Thou knowest, only Thou, Thou knowest that I love Thee.’

With all intense love is mixed up this sad humility. Our love is so great that it seems too little; others, we think, must love far more and better than we, for the person loved is worth infinitely more than we can give. We cannot say we love more than others; we only know we love. And then when our love is challenged thus, we cannot give a direct answer from ourselves; we only appeal, in that sorrow which accompanies even the shadow of doubt, to her or him whom we love. ‘Look into thine own heart,’ we say; ‘thou knowest that I love thee.’

And Christ felt the appeal in Peter’s words, felt in Himself the affection of His friend, knew it was now unshakable—a very rock on which He might build for life—understood all the changes it betokened—and then restored him to his high place, and gave him back his office as Shepherd of the Christian flock. ‘Feed my lambs, thou who lovest so well, thou who hast gone through so bitter a trial and escaped from so dire a fall; feed and strengthen the young, watch over those just born into the faith with the same tenderness and loving-kindness that I have watched over thee. Guard them against failure; and if they fall, restore them by wisdom, justice, and forgiveness, by the com-

passion and the strength that have come to thee now through sorrow and conquered sin.' It is a divine commentary on the words of Christ: 'Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.'

Then came the second question: 'Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?' Out of it the reproof had gone, and the trial—it was no longer 'more than these.' And with the omission of the words that recalled his failure, the question was now more personal; it was as if Christ wished to hear, now, as a personal pleasure to Himself, that He was loved. 'Lovest thou Me?' and Peter answered in the same words.

What more could he add? All expression would not have expressed his love, and he was silent, save to throw himself again on the knowledge of Christ. 'Thou knowest that I love Thee;' and again Jesus accepted the affection as true, and again, only in different words, gave him charge as His Apostle—'Feed My sheep.' It placed him in a higher post; it made him not only the helper of the weak, but the overseer of the strong. Not only the children of the faith, but the veterans were in his charge. 'Take the Church itself under thy guidance; because thou lovest Me so deeply, and none have better reason to feed My people for Me.'

Once more, however, came the question. One would have thought that enough had been said; that there needed no third demand of 'Lovest thou Me?' and the Apostles who stood by, and specially the tender heart of

John, must have felt keenly how their brother was being tried. But they must have expected the question, and it lay in the fitness of things that it should be thrice repeated. They all knew of the threefold denial; and had Christ stayed after the second question, they might have thought that something had not been forgiven, that the restoration of Peter to his office, and his restoration to the love of Christ, was not complete. Peter himself would afterwards have missed something; some doubt of his full forgiveness might have lingered had not the question and the charge been as threefold as the denial. At present, he was grieved—that was but natural: he was certain now that Christ meant to refer to His betrayal, and again the deep repentance of those bitter tears filled his heart; but afterwards he would rejoice that Christ had pierced to the very heart of his sin and grief, and in his threefold charge healed his threefold treachery. And he answered, smitten to the very centre of his soul, answered with a touch of his old impetuosity, ‘Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee.’ Then came the third reply, the reply that showed him he was fully forgiven, fully restored to his place—‘Feed My sheep.’ For the first time then, his conscience was now entirely free. The past guilt, the past sorrow became like a dream. He knew and felt the blessedness of perfect forgiveness. He could walk with Jesus, and feel that not one shadow of reproach was in His mind against him. The burden of the past was lifted off, never to return. And with it had gone for ever from the Apostle’s soul the power over him of the evil side of his character. There could not,

in a man so taught and tried, so made conscious of his errors and his weakness—there could not be any longer boastfulness, or fear, or vanity, or desire to be master, or desire for high place, or any sudden drawing back from the work given him to do. Impulse in him would no longer be the slave of circumstances which might lead him, as of old, into any of these evils. It was now steadily directed by a mighty, over-mastering love, to right, and duty, and self-devotion; and it is not too much to say that the whole of this scene, and all it did for him, and the whole of his career with Christ, with the several faults that belonged to his impulsive character, were present to his mind when he wrote the fifth chapter of his Epistle, using at the beginning, the very phrase of Christ to himself: ‘Feed the flock of God.’

¶ Nor is it too much to say, that the next words of Christ signifying what death Peter should die, as the writer of the Gospel thought, may be further explained in a simpler way, as a summing-up of the whole change in Peter’s character. ‘When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest’; thy own will, thy own impulse, were thy only guides: in the rest of thy life it will be different, even to old age; ‘thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. Follow Me.’ Not thy own impulse, not thy will, but Mine—Mine, that thou lovest, shall rule thy life. Thou wilt have to submit to the fate of those that follow Me, to suffer patiently, to endure wrong, to bear the pain and persecution thou wouldest not. Follow no

longer the blind leadings of impulse, follow Me. It will be easy, for thou lovest.'

'Follow Me!' It links the first interview by the lake with the last. As it was said, Peter looked round, and there lay the lake, its waves dancing in the morning light. The nets were on the sand; the multitude of fishes were glittering in them; the boats were drawn up upon the shore; his partners were again by his side, and Jesus had come upon them. It was the same scene he had seen before when he said in his impulse that he was a sinful man. Nature was the same: she who is always the same in the midst of our stormiest change; but in all else she was different. Peter looked back, and an eternity seemed to roll between the first meeting and this last. The confession of sin he had then made, was true, but it was that of an untried child, nor did he know how true it was. Since then he had known what it was to be tried, to fail, to touch the depths of miserable guilt and human weakness. He had passed through a tempest, and he was now a man.

He had at the first meeting given up all in quick impulse, and gone after Christ, in admiration and enthusiasm. But his love had no foundation on a rock, only on the shifting sands of human feeling, and when the wind and rain arose, the fair house fell. Now he knew that love meant not the momentary rush of quick delight alone, but the steady direction of his whole being towards the will and wish of One who had redeemed him from an abyss of failure, who had forgiven him a base betrayal; not the passionate thought, now and

again, of the person loved, in gusts of imagination, but that deep-rooted love which, having woven its fibres through every power of character, would never let him dream even of following any other master. ‘Follow Me.’ Was it possible the words were the same; so different seemed the meaning, so different the knowledge he had of himself and of Christ from that they bore when first he heard them.

Put yourself in his place; realise his retrospect; look forward with him as he first heard the call. Then he looked forward to victory and honour in an earthly kingdom. Now he knew better. He had seen the life of Christ, seen how it had been led, how it had ended; and the old words, as now he heard them, prepared him for suffering and for the cross. But the early hope was not quite vanished. The light that broke upon him then, and irradiated his young heart, was not lost; there was to be a victory and a kingdom, only they were transferred to another world. They were spiritual, not material; an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for him.

[May 18, 1879.]

*ONE THING IS NEEDFUL.*

‘And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on.’—St. Luke xii. 22.

TAKE no thought for your life. This does not mean, do not think at all of these things. But it does mean, do not worry, do not be over-careful, do not over-think yourself on transient matters. Even then it is strange to read it in the midst of our complicated and over-crowded modern life. It seems spoken out of another world, over which other winds than ours blow, and other skies shine: a world of simplicity and peace, where people are not tormented, where one thing—love—is needful, and men choose, because they love, things which shall not be taken away from them.

As for us, that is not the world in which the greater part of us live. Our life is tormented with the intercrossing of a multitude of thoughts and things. If you have ever thrown a handful of small stones, that scattered in the air, into a glassy sheet of water, and watched the multitudinous series of crossings and intercrossings made by each system of waves that started from each stone, and then fancied your life as a leaf on

the water tossed and beaten by the interlacing waves, you have fancied what is true of men and women's lives, here in London, everywhere where many men and many interests congregate.

Every day new facts, new inventions, new theories are launched upon us by science, and round each of them a battle takes place. Every day some new opinion, or new discussion, or new way of putting old things that we loved, is hurried into the realm of religion, and pressed on us loudly, even angrily, and over each of them the fight begins among religious people. And when the scientific and religious professors have had their own rushing to and fro within their own worlds, they rush at one another; and quiet people who would like to enjoy what they know and to let their imagination play upon a few truths in science, or who wish to feel and to love deeply one or two infinite religious truths and hopes, cannot do it for the noise.

It is much the same in business and in politics. The old-fashioned business life which took care about one pursuit is almost gone. Men are not content unless they bring a dozen cross currents in, hoping to enlarge their sphere from other quarters; and end not in enlarging it, but in confusion and bankruptcy, and at last dishonesty. In politics men decide their action, not on the simple grounds of a few principles, but at the point to which they are finally driven by the confused interweaving of the opinions of others and of party exigencies. It is almost impossible to do a plain business or to give a clear vote, and to know why one has given it.

And then, into the midst of this, showers, like the

shower of gravel into the lake, the infinite disturbance and useless trouble of the critics, who tell us what is wrong, as if that were any good. Not a book appears, not a picture, not a speech or a theory—nature herself can do nothing—but a hundred tongues are let loose to pick out the faults of each thing, or to spoil it with vain praise, or to make the public think of the cleverness of the critic and not of the thing he criticises. It is scarcely possible to see anything as it really is, or to feel anything at first hand, or to enjoy anything freely and at peace, or to let any work say its own say in silence to us. All things that are most worth loving and enjoying are hidden by the battles of opinion that rage over them; and there are only too few who can stop their ears to the noise and simply win the peace of love and enjoyment. Even old, quiet, faithful nature, who goes undisturbed on her way, creating for us beautiful things in places yet undeformed by our trade and greed, is not let alone to tell us her secrets in peace. She has to make her way to our hearts through all that science says about her customs, through so much religious use of her, through so much of what the poets say we ought to feel about her, through such incessant efforts on our part to make her feel with us in as complicated a fashion as we feel ourselves, that it is the most difficult thing in the world to see her as she is, or to hear her quiet music. We take too much thought about everything.

It would be wise if we could get back to Christ's way: if we would not be so over-careful round our knowledge, our religion, our business, our political principles; if we would shut our ears to the critics; if we would be con-

tent to look straight into the heart of all that art and nature create for our enjoyment. If we could but think less about all these things which we ought to feel at first hand ; or at least, if we could feel them simply before we think about them, what blessing and brightness would encompass life ! It is our worst mistake that we think first and feel afterwards, and we double our mistake when, having felt, we analyse our feeling.

If we care at all to do the reverse of this, the first thing is to render our daily way of life more simple ; and the first element of that is not to listen to, or care for, the opinions of the world, except so far as they are based on the primitive laws of morality and life ; and even then we need not listen to the world's version of them, for that is mixed up with limitations and maxims and social conventions which disturb the clear vision of these laws. But the current opinions of the world on what one should do and think and feel and know, trouble life with such continual thinking about ourselves and our actions, and how we and they seem to others, that there is no simplicity possible in life. Following these current opinions only, we lose all personal initiative, all originality, and of course all that simplicity which comes of frankly following the main lines of our own character. Our inner being is hurried here and there, subject to every wind of impression, and our outward life shares in this complexity. We have no time for quiet, no time for thought, no time to enjoy or love any one thing. No sooner are we at rest, than we are swept away to look at something new, or engage in some fresh pursuit, till in the ceaseless hurry,

the natural hours of sleep and of waking, the natural habits of eating and drinking and dressing, the natural rest and work of a natural day, are all reversed and spoilt. Do you think that these words of Christ have any meaning whatever to the persons who in the country or in London live the life of the world—‘Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, nor yet for the body, what ye shall put on.’ We shall never understand them till we bring life back to simple lines, to freedom, to originality, to simple ways of living, and eating, and drinking, and dressing, and sleeping, and working. Then we shall lay the foundation of the ideal life.

Look at the life of Christ, and the way of it. His youth was passed in a village town, very quietly for thirty years. No multitudinous instruction hindered His genius, there was no overwhelming of His mind by other minds. On Him played great Nature freely, and the flowers and birds, and the change of seasons taught Him the lessons He afterwards made so vivid in the parables. Day by day He looked from the height of Nazareth over the plains and hills and groups of trees and distant towns, each of which was vocal with the stories of His people, with the work and sayings of prophets and psalmists, until His soul was steeped in the past. Through these things God sent His teaching. Day by day too, He saw motherhood, and childhood, and human love, and human faith, and human kindness, and human wrong-doing, and human suffering and disease. And God through these simple things made Him feel how beautiful was goodness, how dreadful evil.

Nature and man were almost His only books, and His own thoughts and emotions educated Him.

And when, inspired by the genius of redeeming, and the mighty thought that had grown up in Him, He went forth into a larger world, what was then His life? It was the life of one simple thought—‘I wish to save mankind.’ He was bound to that, was ruled by it, and itself arose out of the depths of love. Did it hurry Him into a noisy, worldly, troubled life? No, its very simplicity made the life simple. He collected a few simple people about Him of whom He made friends, and whom He taught; and He lived and wandered with them from village to village, field to field, and now and then to the great city.

He kept daily almost face to face with nature, fishing in the lake, roaming through the corn, abiding on the hills, sitting in the vineyards, and by the well to talk with the passers-by. He kept himself daily face to face with mankind; loving children, seeking out the sick and broken-hearted, impassioned about their sorrow as if it were His own, ready to give sympathy to joy. Wherever there was any natural humanity, any lovely or gentle thing said or done, anything through which nature spoke sweetly, freely, He delighted to recognise it, delighted to tell its tale—always, above all (with absolute freedom from the judgment of the world), seeking out the sinner, the lost, the outcast, those whom all despised, that He might give hope and re-awaken love—and only indignant, only resolute in strong rebuke, when He met pretenders, critics of the sins of others, those who could not see or love, those

whom maxims of religion blinded to truth, and conventions of the world blinded to nature.

And as to His religion, it was simpler even than His life. God is your Father ; love Him. Man is your brother ; love him. And when you love God and man, so that you can give your life for both, then you will be pure, and true, and honest, and just, to each other. Morality will follow love as the waves the moon. One thing is needful, He said—It is love.

We cannot live that simple life which gets home to nature and love alone, you think. Why not? We cannot do without knowledge! without instruction! No, but we can be far less complex than we are. We overburden our minds with too much reading, too many things ; and we never find our true treasure out, nor all we have wasted in ourselves, until we come to die. It were wiser to seize the spirit of Christ's early life, to make sure that we have time to receive human impulses when we are young, to let daily life teach us its kindly lessons. No tongue can tell how much education a happy child who is let alone for a little in the day to be happy with others and in its home, may receive from God—nor how much of infinite lessons for life, and of beauty, and awe, and thought, and of whispers from God which none hear, we may have as children and as men if we let books alone for a time, and, while we are innocent, allow the skies, and woods, and streams, and hills to speak. For in those quiet hours when we are looking at first hand, and feeling at first hand humanity and nature, we learn to love, and therefore to enjoy. And that is the first thing. One thing is needful.

We cannot, you think, in the multiplicity of things, live that simple, out-of-door, half idyllic, half solemn life, with its simple friends and wants, its untormented unworldliness, its quiet trust that God would provide all things. *No*, not in form ; but surely we can reach some of its spirit, and take it with us into bustling throng and wrangling mart. We can keep our hearts open, so that we may see beautiful, tender, natural and gracious acts and feelings, understand the true and simple thoughts that come before us out of the human nature of men, and women, and children, in our daily life. To half of the love, and grace, and faith, and joy that encompass us, we are blind, because we take so much thought of things not half worth these simpler things. Half the sorrow we might heal, half the people imprisoned in dull lives we might set free, half the hearts who want our sympathy we pass by, and never know the joy of giving them gracious help, because we are taking so much thought of other things that give us no joy. It is pitiable how much we lose as we go along the wayside of life, with our eyes fixed on the web we are knitting, so eager to finish it, so full of its importance--yet when it is done, we lay it by with a sigh, for perchance (if we awake and have heart enough left) we know how much we have lost.

‘What has been the matter with us?’ we think ; ‘why are we so tired, why so alone, why so much regret in our hearts?’ We know now—we have not had Christ’s secret. We have not known what He said to Mary ; we have not loved enough. One thing was needful, and we missed it. O that dear, simple, only,

still, kindly thing—a loving pleasure in simple human nature ! If we only could have had it, it would have mattered little in how wild a turmoil of business, and thoughts, and society, and religious and political parties, we had lived ; we should have been, throughout, simple of heart and of life, able to enjoy, able to see, able to help, able to win love, happy in old age, beloved when we die ! Get Christ's secret, men and women ; and what it gives you will not be taken away from you.

And that secret, once attained, will open a universe to you. You will have the key which will unlock that paradise of beauty and joy which nature keeps for those who have a simple love of her—simple in this, that it consists in losing everything, all thought, all knowledge, all self-consideration, in absolute delight.

It will be pleasant, without doubt, to know all that science tells you about the stars and flowers and earth, and how they are made and what they do ; but it will be perfect only when you have first had the joy of loving, as if you were a child with a friend, the stars and clouds and the way of the streams in the woods, and the wanderings of the heather on the hill. And if knowledge such as science gives you interferes with or troubles that ever young delight, or spoils your love of their beauty—then you will not hesitate to keep the one thing needful, and to put aside the others. What will it avail you in the days to come, or in the world to come, that you have known the parts of a flower, or the rocks of the earth, unless you have also loved the flower and loved the earth ? But if you have loved nature well, you will have your perfect joy though you may know nothing

about her ; and when you come to the everlasting life with Nature, that joy will not be less. One thing is needful, one thing is good : choose it—choose to simply love. That was Christ's secret. ‘ Consider the lilies of the field, they toil not, neither do they spin, and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.’ It is not the lesson of these words only that we hear in them, it is the note of a wonderful and simple joy in the heart of Him who said them.

And religion ! O if you only knew the infinite worry, trouble, the tangled web of thought, the still more tangled web of feelings wrought upon by thought, that week by week I hear of, because men and women cannot arrive at any simplicity of thinking and feeling about God, and what God wants them to believe and do, you would not wonder that I dwell on this simplicity of life. They take so much thought about doctrine and practice, about subtleties of opinion upon doctrine, that God is altogether hidden, and it is impossible for them to see Christ as He is.

‘ One thing is needful,’ said Christ to Mary, ‘ and thou hast chosen it.’ What was she doing ? She was sitting at His feet in love, and listening to His word. She was loving the best. He was the purest, truest, kindest, gentlest, justest, most loving human nature she had ever seen and felt ; and her whole being became one, and simple, in the unity and simplicity of her love. That was life ; to look at the true life, and to adore it. What, you say, *only* contemplation ? O slow of heart ! Do you imagine that love like that would not

create action at the proper time, would not be impassioned to put its love of all perfect things in Him into the form of active kindness, justice, truth, and goodness ! She had the one needful thing—all the rest was sure to follow. It is as simple as the day to love Christ's character for what it is, with all our heart ; to love it with as much ardour as one loves one's first love on earth, and more. That is the secret. Then you will be a Saviour of men, a lover and redeemer of the lost.

And she heard His word. What was that word ? A creed ? A scheme of doctrine about God and man ? A web of intricate opinion ? So say all the men who make us weary with thinking. But so Christ did not say. His word was this : God is your Father, and He loves you like a child. You are His child. Simple enough ! Yes, but He Himself rested His whole life upon it, and He needed no more ; and He rested the whole salvation of men upon it, and said they needed no more than that. Believe it ; it is all ; everything is in it. It is the one thing needful, and that one thing is always the same — love and believe in love.

You may keep your doctrines, creeds, schemes, just as you may keep your science ; they have their interest for the intellect, and it is hard sometimes for people to live without them ; but they will only do you harm, and make you hard-hearted, and shut your eyes to God and to man, to the true worship of the Spirit and the true practice of life, *unless* you have first and foremost the one secret of simple religion. Love Christ because He is the best of men, and believe that you are loved

by God. Then you will love man and love God, and be ready to die for both. One thing is needful. Find it—O find it! and take no thought of all the theories of theology. One rush of love will tell you more of true religious life than all the disquisitions of preachers and teachers since the beginning of the world.

That is something of the simple life that I wish we could always live, to which I ask the weary to return; a return to love and nature out of taking too much thought for money and success, for knowledge and critical culture, for parties in politics and in business, for doctrines in art, doctrines in religion; a return to love and nature out of all the realm of weary overtroubling. Perhaps you think this life too commonplace, because you think it so simple. Nothing is commonplace for which you greatly care. The essence of a poetic life is that you love what you see and what you do. Commonplace to walk home over the dull road you have gone over a thousand times year by year! But if at the end of it is your home where one sits waiting for you, who was the treasure of your young romance, and is the blessing and joyfulness of your daily life—there is not then a mark on the pavement that has not its association; not a turn on the way that is not linked to a memory of love—the road is alive with passion! *That* spread over all life—is that commonplace?

You would like your life to be art, and this is too simple. That is the mistake of mistakes! This simple life sees things as they are, and loves them; or loves them, and therefore sees them as they are—sees them

simply and loves them ardently ; weeps or rejoices over them without thinking why. And to be able to do that is to be an artist ; an artist in oneself, making, by imagination in the inner life, music, poetry, and pictures out of all we love ; or, if God has made us with the higher gift, and we can put into form what we simply see and passionately love, the artist who creates for men. Whichever we may be, whether this life be perceptive only, or perceptive and creative—it is the life of art, just because it is simple and passionate in seeing and loving, and needs not to take thought of things, and knows there is one thing needful, and only one.

How beautiful it is ! and how, when we have this secret and delight in it, and spread its simple practice over the whole of our life with man, over all our knowledge, and business, and home, and society, over our lonely hours with nature, and our lonely hours with God ; how easily, how happily, with what fairness and brightness, the ordinary life slips into the ideal, and becomes it. To find the ideal life in the normal—that is the problem. Christ found it, and I have told you His way. It seems easy, but it is not so easy. You *must* do two hard things ; you must get rid of the world in your heart, and you must get rid of self—of thinking of yourself, and of feeling round yourself.

I do not know that youth can find it. Youth must go through its questionings, its taking thought, its learning of its own character and self, its problems of knowledge and life and religion. But childhood has it ; and man-

hood may, when it has gone through the times of taking thought, begin to possess it, and win its delight, and keep it for the still ravishment of age. O believe me, One thing is needful—only one: and that one thing is Love.

[October 27, 1878.]

*JUDGMENT OF OTHERS.*

‘Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.’—St. John vii. 24.

THESE words were spoken to those men in Jerusalem, who professed religion, but, being void of love, could not be religious. Zealous for the outward law, they could not do the inward law; secretly violating its weightier matters, they were openly scrupulous about its slightest ceremony; their religion a cruel clinging to fixed doctrines, maxims, and forms, to which, who-ever did not cling along with them, was accused and by them persecuted. They lived by appearance, and therefore they judged by appearance; and because their life was a lie, their judgment was unrighteous.

These were the men who could drag a sinful woman to Christ, not so much in horror of the sin, as to ensnare Him into too merciful a judgment, that they might condemn Him; and yet who found out the same sin in their own hearts, when the lightning of Christ’s glance showed them their shame. They were those who could argue learnedly on evil and good, and yet call goodness devilish when it was against them, as some

do now; who could not eat without washing, but could spill the innocent blood; who could not enter the judgment hall where Pilate sat, lest they should be defiled, but could crucify the Master of purity; who could lead their own cattle away to watering on the Sabbath, but could declare that Jesus was not the Son of God, because He had made a man whole on that day.

It was on account of this last judgment of theirs that Christ administered the rebuke of my text. They had judged by appearance, and their judgment was unrighteous. What that judgment is, and why it is wrong, is our subject.

1. Are we to judge men according to the appearance of their life?

There is a general social judgment which we must give. We look upon a man's outer life and pass a sentence on it either of praise or blame; and so far as appearance goes, that sentence may be just, as long as the matters it judges are within the sphere of the broad lines of right and wrong. But in other matters it may be quite unjust. In matters of convention, in matters of prudence and imprudence—in matters which life or society lay down in maxims, the judgment of the world on a man's whole life is nearly always stupid, or unrighteous, or untrue. It is based on its own views of what life is, and ought to be, and those are wise for the transient, but foolish for the eternal, world. Agreement with those views is nearly always agreement with the unrighteous and untrue. Who does not know the views of the world, and its ideals of life? 'Be rich, be prosperous; do not offend people; chime in

with the majority ; get into big society ; live with the prosperous ; avoid the wretched ; do not touch the publican and the sinner.' These are the things (in principle), so unchanged is the world, the Pharisees said to Christ. To judge a man's life by its conformity with these maxims is to judge by appearance, and the judgment is unrighteous. Keep out of this atmosphere and stand with Christ, apart from the world. Hate all its maxims, all its ways of thinking on these matters, with undying hatred. The temptation to yield to them is incessant ; it comes in the air you breathe, in everything, at every moment of life. Your only chance of escape is to live in another world, the world of love and truth, and pity, and worship of things that bring no wealth, no prosperity, no praise. Then you will naturally abhor the very touch, the very thought of the maxims of the world. You will neither flatter the Pharisee nor scorn Christ as a madman.

But there are cases when we must agree, in a general way, with the judgments of society.

When a man's life is an insult to social morality, we must, as members of society, condemn him. He has borne poisonous fruits, and he must be made to understand what he has done. We cannot admit him to our house, or make him our friend ; nay, even should he repent, it may be impossible to reverse this social judgment. Otherwise that social conscience, which it is so needful to keep up, would become diseased, and the barrier against the things that ruin national life be broken down. In the same way, we have to chime in with the judgments of the law on crimes, though the

law judges by appearance, and though its judgments are sometimes untrue or inadequate. We are members of a society constituted and bound together by laws, and we must accept their judgments, even when they are unjust laws, until we can get them altered; otherwise the fabric of government would go to pieces. But in both cases, social and legal, the judgment is made according to appearance, and we carry it out towards the guilty, not as men to men, but as members of a society and a state towards other members of the state and society.

But the subject has another aspect when we try to judge the whole character of the man. We have no right as a fellow-man to condemn the outcast or the criminal, on social or legal grounds. For in this relation of brotherhood, we do not stand before the bar of society or of an earthly judge—we stand before God, who judges from the heart; who does not take notice only of social immoralities or of crimes, but of sins.

Neither law nor society take judicial notice of the sins of a man. You may be proud, a hypocrite, malicious, grasping, a hater, full of impure thought, and they lay no ban upon you. What they do not see, they do not judge. But these invisible qualities are the materials for God's judgment. Remember, then, you are bound not to judge as a man the brother you condemn as a member of society, because you may yourself be a far worse man in the sight of God.

He whose whole life is selfishness, he who never does anything for others—all society may praise him, for he will be rich; but God's judgment on him is that

he is tenfold more wicked than the man whose immorality has excluded him from society, but whose immorality has not been selfish. Simon the Pharisee, judging from appearances, condemned the woman who wept over the feet of Christ; but Christ, who saw love there, knew that God had reversed the judgment of society; condemned the Pharisee, and forgave the woman.

So too with regard to the judgments of the law. Two men have committed murder. One has slain the man who ruined his daughter, and brought infamy to his hearth; the other has slain his benefactor for the sake of gain. The law hangs both, and we accept its judgment as members of a state. But when we judge as men, we ought to judge as God will judge, not according to the appearance of the act, but in accordance with its motive and its antecedents, and feel that the man who brought desolation on a home, though the law does not touch him, is more guilty than his murderer.

In truth, and to close this section of the subject, what do we know of men from their outward life? So little that we have scarcely any materials for a true judgment. We see a merchant attentive to his business, rich and honest before the world, and the world praises him. The day comes, and we find he is a rogue and a cheat, and has been so for years. We listen to the preacher, and he seems to enjoy his work. What do we know of the inward pain he may have, of the tragedy of his life? Nothing whatever. We watch the politician administering the state with calm resolution, speaking as if all things were secure. What do we

know of the storm within, of the terrible shipwreck that may be at hand? Nothing! The human heart is hidden from us, and out of that alone can be drawn the materials for a righteous judgment of the lives of men.

2. Again, you are forbidden to judge the whole of a man's life from the results of his acts upon his own life. That is the way in which the world, while the man is alive, usually judges and it is almost always wrong. Yet so deadly and obstinate is the force of the maxims of the world, that though fifty years nearly always reverse its judgments, it goes on judging in the same way and on the same grounds: 'men suffer, therefore they must be wrong; poverty, pain, exclusion from society, prove their guilt. Or—'we fear the acts and speech of these dangerous persons; it is enough: they trouble and irritate the common course of things; they are mad, or they are fools'; and so it comes to pass, they are tossed aside into the street, or put out of the way. They have a devil. Why, their very mother and brethren wish to shut them up. They are poor, it is because they deserve to be poor; they endure loss and pain, it is God's judgment on some gross folly or some hidden crime. In condemning them we are, cries the world, on the side of God.

If for nothing else than an answer to this lie, it would be worth while to maintain that Christ was the beloved Son of God, and the greatest of men. Divine and matchless as His life was, what were its results on Himself? Not crowns, not prosperity, not the homage of mankind, not wealth; but poverty, and suffering, and

rejection by all the fine society and all the established religion of the time, and at last persecution and cruelty, and death. He died with criminals, and was called a deceiver. And the men of the time who judged His life by the appearance of its results on Himself, came by from Jerusalem with their sapient sneer and cruel taunt, wagging their heads and saying, ‘If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. He saved others, Himself He cannot save’—speaking the truth without knowing it was the truth. For it was because He *was* the Son of God that He could not come down from His throne of love upon the tree; it was because He could not save Himself that He saved others. That they could not understand. They saw the appearance of God’s anger and man’s rejection in His miserable end, and they judged His life as wickedness or folly or deceit. Centuries have written on that judgment—falsehood. And we will thank God that, in the life of the Son of God, in the central life of history, in Him whom we love and honour beyond the world, in whom we see God, and God’s character revealed—a divine and eternal contradiction has been given to the world’s lie—that obloquy and slander, and suffering and poverty and shame and death, are any proof that a man’s life is base or foolish or degraded. It is emblazoned on the walls of heaven and earth by the death of Christ, that the prosperous are not always right, and the sufferer always wrong.

3. Again, you cannot judge a man’s character according to the appearance of any single act. You must know the man before you can blame or praise

him for the act. You must know the circumstances which preceded it, the many motives which entered into every act and the sum of which impelled it, before you can truly judge the man from the action. The act itself is the apparent thing, and is a poor ground for judgment. It is that which, inwardly and unapparent, has prompted the act which you ought to know if your judgment of the man is to be according to right. Supposing you had heard St. Paul at Galatia preaching down the bondage of the Jewish law, and then seen him at Jerusalem with his head shaved, fulfilling a Jewish vow in the temple and circumcising Timothy —you would, like the world about him, if you judged from appearance, have charged him with inconsistency. But how mistaken you would have been. For this very vow, had you known the man and his motives, would have seemed to you what it really was—a result of the principle of liberty which you charged him with violating. For Paul felt that he was free to use the ceremonial law, or not to use it, in subordination to love. It was in strict consistency with his principle that he became a Jew, that he might win the Jews to Christ.

The world thinks it is very righteous in its judgment when it accuses a man of inconsistency, who has changed his opinion, or done something it cannot square with his published views. It is a cheap and vulgar cry. Sometimes it is just, but whether it be just or unjust we cannot determine at the time. For a man is often most consistent with the ground of his whole character when he appears most inconsistent

with his past. The ruling principle of his life may be love of truth, desire to be true to his own conscience. He changes at forty, I will suppose—a view which he has supported till within a few years, because he is convinced he has been wrong. And the world cries out upon him. Is its judgment righteous? According to the appearance—yes. But which would be the real inconsistency? To keep his old opinion while he disbelieves it, because he fears the hue and cry of the world and the loss and suffering which will follow his change? or, led by the foundation principles of his life, to be true in change to those, and avow openly that what was true before to him, is now untrue? Neither judge a man quickly who changes, nor have any fear yourself, if you think it right to change, of the cry of inconsistency. There are only two judgments to care for—God's judgment, and your own soul's. Be true to Him and true to yourself; and let the world say what it will. Its voice, in laughter or in anger, is but the crackling of thorns under a pot. It may hurt your life—that you must bear; but it cannot touch your soul—that is God's; and though all men judge you unrighteously, you shall yet win, if you be true, from the Lord the righteous Judge, the crown of righteousness.

Nor, in this connection of thought, can you judge a man according to the appearance of his feeling or his words. A Northern and an Eastern meet in sorrow. The Englishman sees the Arab weeping loudly, rending his clothes in public, casting dust upon his head, and, judging from appearance, says the sorrow is transient or unmanly. The Arab, seeing the Englishman calm,

tearless, bending his grief to his will that he may keep it sacred, hiding it in daily work, says that there is no sorrow there. Both would be wrong, for both men are true to their temperament and their climate.

In the same way, nothing is more common than rash judgments of this kind in religious life. There are men who speak much of religion, whose eye kindles, and whose voice trembles when they talk of God's doings with them and Christ's love for them. There are others who never speak, and never show emotion: and the tendency of the one is to condemn the other as untrue. Yet both may be faithful and honest, and both love God truly. If you judge from appearance, you will have to condemn one of them. Who are you to judge? Do you see into the heart of the man? Emotions alone are nothing, words alone are nothing as the materials for just judgment. It is the life that underlies both which is everything. 'Let me die the death of the righteous,' said Balaam. 'Lord, Thou hast deceived me,' cried Jeremiah. Lay down the rule that you are to judge a man by his impassioned words, and how you would misjudge. You would call Balaam pious and Jeremiah impious.

On the whole, we have scarcely any right to judge at all, just because we know nothing but the appearance. When we know more, then we may, with diffidence, judge; but, for the most part, we have no business to make the judgment openly, unless it happen to be a judgment of love. Still, after long experience and long labour towards certain qualities, we may attain

some power of judging righteously, and what those qualities are I will try and tell you.

The first of these is to love men as Christ loved them, through utter loss of self; and the other qualities are secured by love. To judge a man justly we must know his heart. And it is love alone which penetrates into that secret realm, and imagination, child of love. You may argue for ever over a man's character and actions, and bring the whole armoury of the understanding to bear upon them; but his child who loves him will understand him and his doings better than you. You see the whirling of the spindles and the looms, and hear the noise; but the child who loves, sits in the room with the driving wheel. You see what is done; he sees how and why it is done.

Love a man, and he will open his heart to you; love him, and you will see his heart before he opens it. You will feel the man. In proportion to your love—and in strict proportion to that is your knowledge—is your just judgment of his life. It was by this, and not by any supernatural power, that Christ knew what was in men; could always touch them home, heal them, comfort them, recreate them. He knew, and He judged men justly because He loved.

With love comes patience. There is nothing that needs so much patience as just judgment of a man, or even of one act of a man. We ought to know his education, the circumstances of his life, the friends he has made or lost, his temperament, his daily work, the motives which filled the act, the health he had at the time, the books he was reading, the temptations of his

youth—we ought to have the knowledge of God to judge him justly; and God is the only judge of a man. But to judge him at all, fancy what patience to do all this work even as far as we can do it! There is nothing which enables us to do it but love of the man. It is only love which never gives way to that impatience of labour which more than most things vitiates just judgment. It is only love which makes us take pains with a man. Just judgment must then be slow, and one mark of an unjust judgment is its haste.

And with love comes also freedom from prejudice, and that of two kinds. There is a prejudice for a man or woman which comes of impassioned love, which sees everything as right in the beloved, which cannot see wrong. That is love, but it is mixed with an element of untruth. I do not know but that the love which so acts and thinks is not, so far as it does not see any evil in the person loved, really selfishness. It does not choose to see the wrong lest it should be obliged to speak of it, and so make the wrongdoer angry, and the anger hurt the lover. True love holds itself within a higher love of right; only in so doing is it truly unselfish. It does not think of itself at all, whether it will suffer or not through its blame of evil in those it loves—and in this loss of self it loses prejudice.

There is another prejudice which hinders just judgment. It is when we think how judgment of another will affect our own interests, not in the matter of love, but in the matter of repute or wealth, or of the friendship of others who like or dislike the man we judge. To consider these things in judging another spoils

our clearness of sight. We cannot sufficiently get rid of ourselves to put ourselves in his place; it is only love, and such love as Christ had, that can do that; only love which can, when we look at another, so lose every shred of self-interest or of prejudice, as to be wholly in, and a part of the life of, the person whom we judge.

These qualities are all modes of love; and, in truth, love includes all we need for judging righteously of men. Of course I do not exclude the understanding, but very little of that is necessary; and by itself without love, the mere understanding never ceases making mistakes in this matter; it walks hand in hand with the world's judgment; indeed it is 'the world' in our nature. Whereas love, even with only as much understanding as a bird, will make certainly inadequate judgments of a man, but as far as love influences them, true ones.

We are very proud of our understanding; but after all, it is quite the lowest part of our higher nature, and does the least true and the least beautiful work. We will not believe that, and therefore we do nothing but blunder in life, and philosophy, and religion, and politics, and art, and in the management of men. One of the last things the understanding is likely to say is that all men have a soul of goodness in them; and that if we wish to judge them righteously, we ought to believe in this goodness in them in spite of their apparent evil. 'Nonsense,' cries the understanding, which only dwells on what it sees and hears plainly; 'I judge from the evidence, on what clearly appears;

and this man and that woman are wicked, and must be condemned ; there is no good in them at all.'

Very clear ! and there is no answer to it which the understanding will understand. For the only answer is not founded on evidence at all, but on belief in God being in all men, a thing which cannot be proved. The only proof that the belief of love—that there is goodness in all men—is a true belief, lies in this—that when we act upon it, we discover and waken goodness, often to our infinite surprise, and save men. We find we have judged righteously, but we judged not from evidence, but from faith in what Christ told us about men, and from love of His way of dealing with men. For certainly, the unshaken belief in human goodness, in God being in the worst and vilest of men, in all men being His children and having His character in them, was at the root of Christ's judgment of men, and He said that His judgment was just.

Lastly, Christ said, 'My judgment is just, because I seek the will of the Father which hath sent me.'

How can doing God's will secure just judgment of men ? To do God's will is to be true, and loving, and merciful, and righteous ; is to know these mighty powers of truth, and love, and mercy, and righteousness by being them and doing them, by possessing, and being possessed of them. Then we can see them in others ; but not otherwise. If you are not pure and true, you may strain your eyes for ever, and yet you will not be able to see purity or truth underlying the outward life of men and women. Only truth sees truth ; only purity sees purity ; only love sees love. The world saw only

dishonesty in Zacchæus ; Christ saw honesty. The world saw only lust in the Magdalen ; Christ saw love. The world saw only the appearance, saw that which it believed in, the devil in man ; Christ saw what lay beneath, the divinity in man.

And you, if you live the things of God, will see their smallest germ in men.

[February 16, 1873.]

*THE LAW OF DIVINE JUDGMENT.*

‘For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.’—St. Matthew xxiv. 28.

THE text illustrates the true meaning of Prophecy. Christ has begun His discourse by speaking of the ruin coming on Jerusalem, and has described it as a coming of the Son of Man to judgment, using in His description all the figurative and poetical forms which the Prophets before Him had used to express a national overthrow,—the turning of the sun into darkness, of the moon into blood, falling stars and roaring seas. At the end He is led on to speak of the final judgment of the whole world, when, this dispensation of time being over, man shall be transferred to eternity; and in describing both these events He describes, in idea, at the same time, all other great national judgments and all particular judgments. The prophecy is not confined to Jerusalem; it foretells what will happen again and again in history to nations in the same moral condition as Jerusalem. But how does it foretell? Not by any miraculous foreseeing of the event, nor from any special knowledge of the future, but through knowledge of a spiritual law, which, being

unchangeable, will work itself out in reward or punishment, at all times in history and in all places. ‘Where, Lord,’ said the disciples, ‘where shall all this happen; at what particular place or time?’

Now if the common notion of prophecy were true, Christ would have marked out place and time, entered into details, and, perhaps, based on the distinct fulfilment of what He foretold, the truth of His mission. But He does nothing of the kind. He lays down a law, and bases the fulfilment of His words on the invariability of that law. He does precisely the same thing and prophesies in precisely the same way, in the spiritual and moral world, as the natural philosopher, relying on the invariability of physical law, does in the world of science. What is that law? ‘And He answered and said, Wheresoever the carcase is,’ that is wherever there is moral corruption, ‘there will the eagles of judgment be gathered together.’ Given a certain state of degraded national morality, that nation will suffer from a judgment.

This is the true method and meaning of prophecy, and on this ground all the prophecies of the Old Testament as well as the New are to be explained. There are universal moral laws; men near to God see and know those laws, and apply them to the state of existing nations and men. If they find them in a moral state which those laws condemn, they say, Those nations will be the prey of the eagles; and Christ said with regard to Jerusalem that the generation should not pass away till all the judgment should be fulfilled for that city. But he went further, led by this single

example, to declare the whole law of judgment. Wherever there is absolute corruption there is devouring judgment; there I shall come to overthrow. It is a universal principle, and on universal principles all prophecy in the Scripture is based. That which is not, is guess, and its fulfilment mere coincidence.

2. The method of Christ's teaching is illustrated by the text.

First, it concentrates in one short, sharp sentence the meaning of a whole discourse. This was His frequent habit, and it shows His mastery over His materials. We find such sentences again and again at the end of the Parables.

Secondly, it is couched in the language of symbolism; the language which lasts the longest and is the first to appear; the language which appeals to imagination and emotion in their own realm, and which best becomes religion. And mark how vivid the symbolism is.

When a wild beast falls in the desert, or a beast of burden on the highway, there is no stir in heaven for a time. But, far above human ken, the vulture is floating poised on his wings, and looking downwards. His eye soon distinguishes the motionless thing, for he hunts by an eyesight unequalled in power among all living things, and like a stone he drops through miles of air. Others floating in the same upper region see their brother's descent, and know its meaning. One dark speck after another grows swiftly from the horizon, and in a few minutes fifty vultures are round the carrion.

That illustrates, and with astonishing point and

sharpness—for the disciples had often witnessed such a scene—the suddenness, the usefulness, and the necessity of judgment. There is no delay, if utter corruption has begun. Inevitable, swift, unerring as the vulture's descent on the carcase, is the judgment-coming of the Son of Man to corrupt communities and corrupted men.

From all this we now infer the law of judgment. It is this: Wherever there is entire moral corruption then there is final punishment; wherever there is partial corruption, there is remedial punishment. It is a principle to guide us through history. There are many objections brought against recorded judgments of God in the Bible—the destruction of the Flood, the ruin of Sodom, the extermination of the Canaanites. We are told that these were unworthy of a God of love, that to say that they were done by God is immoral. But the answer is that God is said to do that in the Bible which is done by natural laws that relate to nations, just as we return the verdict on a man who has died violently, through violation of laws of health, that he died by visitation of God. God, in His capacity as Governor of the world, and as Educator of mankind, is bound to destroy corruption. Those who perished in these judgments were utterly base, and their destruction was both necessary and useful. It is necessary that the vultures should devour the carcase, lest it pollute the air and breed a pestilence. It is necessary that corrupted nations should be blotted out, lest they infect the world with evil which may delay the whole progress of mankind.

That is God's justice ; not the work of blind anger or of favouritism, as some have represented it. Favouritism can give no reason why one is preferred and another put away. In every case of God's work before us, the reasons stand out clear. Fury is passionate, hasty, unthoughtful. In each of these cases justice is represented as waiting, as deliberate, as quiet. We are told that a hundred and twenty years were given to the ancient world ; that there were not five righteous men in Sodom ; and that the youthful Israelites were not let loose on Canaan till the iniquity of the Amorites was full. That is not the revenge which passionate anger takes ; it is the slow, sure, abiding, necessary work of justice ; slow in its approach, taking note of every excuse, watching for every shred of repentance ; and where all is vain, and the long-suffering of justice not exhausted, but useless any longer, then swift as lightning come the vultures, fateful, inexorable, necessary. They must come, and it would not have been love, but that pity which is the worst injustice, which would have spared the corrupt. There comes a time in a man's or a nation's life when pity to them is to be unpitying to others.

We speak of the love of God with foolish weakness. We clothe it with the caprice and change of our human love, and think that it can be flattered or seduced by our prayers to give up punishment. We speak of it as if it were separate from His justice ; as if in God, the essential unity, there were two attributes which plead one against the other. The truth is that love and justice in a character wholly and perfectly at one are

the same thing seen from different sides. One may just as truly say of God that His love weighs acts in His balances and rewards and punishes, as that His justice does so.

And the results, which seem to us different, flow from one source, and we trace them to the same root. They differ because the one thing touches different characters differently. To the pure and loving He is seen as Love; by the impure and hating as judicial wrath; but both the love and the wrath are the same. It is we that divide them. The north-east wind which destroys the unhealthy lungs strengthens the healthy; the acid which is innocuous to gold disintegrates the baser metal; the wind and sea which waft the well-managed ship into port dash the ill-steered bark upon the rocks; the trial which ennobles one character crushes another. But the wind and the sea, and the acid, and the trial, are not two things, but one; only they produce a different effect on different things—to one reward, to the other punishment. To one they seem favour, to another anger; to one they are destruction, to another blessing. God is one, and His judgments flow from love and from justice conceived as one thing.

Again, such judgments as those of which I speak are distinctly works of love to man, and can be seen in that light. God is long-suffering as long as, so to speak, there is a chance of change left in a corrupting nation; but when it becomes a carcase on the face of the earth, polluting it and propagating disease, arresting the growth of the world, then the justice which destroys is love

to mankind. We bury a dead body lest it should infect the neighbourhood. God destroys a wicked people lest they should infect the world. And our own sense of justice goes with the destruction. Nor, when we are wise, do we really think that such justice shows want of love. We know that the weak man who shrinks from exacting deserved punishment is often the most cruel when his own interests are touched ; and we can trust ourselves in the hour of our trouble best to One whose justice we are so sure of, that we know that, if our trouble was caused by wrong doing, He would make us feel that wrongness before He would relieve the trouble.

Nor is this judicial punishment only useful ; it has in it, since it follows law, an element of necessity. It is never the result of capricious will ; nor of the arbitrary anger of God. It is the natural result of the state of the nation, and the work of the judgment depends on the amount of evil and good in a nation. The effects of such outward events as war, pestilence, famine, or revolution depend on the character of the people. If there be real life in them, these things stir it into more active life. War has often regenerated a nation, and revolution recreated it, pestilence and famine developed its virtues ; but Sodom, rotten to the heart with vice—Rome, where all purity had perished, where luxury had eaten away the hearts of her citizens—Jerusalem, torn by internal dissension, stained with the blood of all who had striven for her good, the whitened sepulchre of the world—these were, as they then existed, dead, corrupt, and when the ruin came, it but revealed the

inward decay. It needed but a touch from God ; but the real work of destruction they had wrought themselves.—‘Where the carcase is, there shall the eagles be gathered together.’

The same things hold good for modern history. It is not in the Bible alone that judgments come. The histories there are no isolated cases. But we are told in its pages that God did these things, that they are part of His government of the world. And, instead of confining His action to the events told in that book, we now turn and say, out of lessons learnt from it—That whenever judgment falls on a people or a government, it is as much the act of God, as the overthrow of Sodom, or the fall of the cities of Canaan. One such judgment—there have been many within the last twenty years, of different intensity—but one such judgment, sudden, swift, overwhelming, such as history rarely records, has happened in our own time ; when the worst government Europe had seen for long, worst in its results and in its causes, broke up in a single month, and the world knew that God had not forgotten man—Where the carcase was, the eagles gathered together.

The leader of that government has since passed away. I said nothing at the time of his death, for I could not join for a moment in the tone taken concerning him by the public press and by society. Deserved misfortune may demand pity, but scarcely induce praise ; and when such misfortune leads a nation like England to condone public crime, and to forget in its excitement all moral standards of judgment relative to the acts of a ruler as a ruler, it does not show any admirable

qualities in the nation. The voice of the greater part of the public press and of society went far beyond the limits of what was just, and delivered itself over to the mere sentiment of the moment. History will frown hereafter at the glorification by England of one, who, however excellent a private person he might have been, was the deadly enemy of France, and one of the worst rulers into whose hands a nation could have fallen. He has been judged, as a ruler—for I do not speak of him as a man before his God—by a higher law than ours. But few things are more dangerous than pity when it forgets morality and pushes justice from her throne. For the man—pity him if you like, if you can ; but do not condone his deeds, do not excuse guilt like his. Half Europe joins in condolence at the death of an exiled Emperor. What tears were expended on his victims? on the ten thousand who slowly died in a hideous exile by a death in comparison of which the horrors of the Terror were merciful? There are things which men ought not to forget ; and while I do not wish to declaim against one on whose ear blame cannot now fall, I do wish to protest against the sentimentalism which errs against the interests of public morality.

It is only a piece of that relaxation of public morals which one is unwillingly forced to see in England ; though I have hope that the tide has turned and that a better spirit is entering society. I believe the awful judgment passed on France has done us good, and that we have taken the warning. A higher tone seems to mark our statesmen. Our books, our theatres, our press are less fond of dallying with vice. I would fain hope

that our London society this season may be less extravagant, less foolish, less desirous of running to the edge of what it knows to be wrong, and looking over it, only for the sake of the excitement ; less ambitious of mere display, less enslaved to wealth, and less subject to its temptations. For it ought to be a solemn thought to all of us, as individual men and women, that in our lives we may do much to hasten the corruption or to develop the life of England ; to bring on us the action of this inexorable law which annexes destruction to corruption, or to cherish those principles of action and thought which keep true life flowing through the veins of a people : public and private honesty ; patriotism unstained by selfish desire for place or pelf ; truthfulness to our convictions ; domestic morality ; honourable love of home, yet not forgetfulness of our duties as citizens and men ; reverence for purity and less slavery to passion ; love for simple unaffected life ; less delight in unnatural and fashionable excitements ; wiser reverence for man shown in systematic effort to uplift the ignorant and to civilise the brutalised ; a truer and a wider sacrifice of self, not only for the interests of those dear to us, but for the larger interests of mankind ; a steady effort to get rid of corrupt manners and books ; to put down gambling and the unmanly and cruel sports which amuse our idle youth ; else, as sure as God lives, and His law is certain, judgment will come on us, slowly, inexorably, necessarily. For, wheresoever the carcase is, there shall the eagles be gathered together.

[July 7, 1878.]

*THE LIMITS OF FORGIVENESS.*

‘Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him ? till seven times ?

‘Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times : but, Until seventy times seven.’—St. Matthew xviii. 21, 22.

THE mark of all the speech, as of poets, so of prophets, is its symbolic character, so that one is all but certain to mistake their meaning if we take their words literally. One might say that they did this on purpose, in order that their sayings should never be fixed down into a rigid rule of life, or a rigid opinion. But it is not done on purpose. It is of the essence of their nature, and of their way of thinking and feeling, to speak in this way. They cannot help it. For they do not live in the world of the understanding, where things are clearly outlined and can be expressed in clear words, but in the realm of imagination, where they meet infinite truths, where they seem to see far down into the centre of things, but where mists are continually rolling up to hide their view ; where nothing is clearly outlined ; where they guess and suspect and believe, but where they do not know, except by love and faith ; where all assertions come from the warmth of the heart, from that impas-

sioned and crowned feeling which the understanding despises, but which those who have it, whether they call it love or imagination, say is the last and highest faculty of man—the faculty whose work gives force to the work of the understanding, without which the understanding and its work is the blind leading the blind—the faculty which

Is but another name for absolute power,  
And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,  
And reason in her most exalted mood.

Living then in the world of supersensuous things, dwelling with thought and love, and with both in their illimitable expressions, the poets and prophets know that words can only suggest, through imagery and beauty which kindle warmth in the heart, the realities and truths of which they are themselves conscious, and these imaginative words they use; knowing also very well, that if they were to attempt to define in intellectual propositions, literally stated, matters which belong to infinity, they would not suggest or express them, but only limit them, and in limiting them destroy their essence which is unlimited. Think of the clauses of the Athanasian Creed which try to explain the Trinity. Read at random any of the essays, so frequent now, of scientific men upon such questions as the existence of God or of the soul. They belong to the same literary category as the Athanasian Creed, though that is not a bracketing they would be ambitious of. They are clever, hard-thinking; but one feels, even while one agrees with their conclusions, that they are all abroad. The writers are like men who have

never been in love writing about love. One knows that a phrase like 'Come unto me, all that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest' is worth the whole of them, and in its results on mankind will outweigh a million of their sentences. Nay more, Christ's saying is in the region of the things discussed, and therefore speaks to them ; whereas the others, not being in that region, do not touch the things at all.

Forced, then, by their own nature, and by the infinite nature of the things, to speak in imaginative symbols which are not capable of a literal interpretation, the poet and the prophet (and the elements of their minds are the same) cannot lay down maxims of morality or fixed opinions. The things they speak of are eternal, and maxims and opinions are temporary. The things they love are infinite, and maxims and opinions define the limits of thought and feeling on the things concerned.

You will not find a single saying of Christ's which has any approach to a maxim of morality, or which draws near to a limited opinion on the subjects which belong to religious life or thought or feeling. There is nothing He ever said which is to be taken literally, nothing which is not said within the region where the pure imagination is imperial master.

Here is an instance in His talk with Peter. Peter wanted a literal statement as to the duty of forgiveness, its practice and its limits ; something as clear as the things laid down by the Jewish doctors in their law. Christ replied, 'Until seventy times seven.' What does that mean ? That we are to forgive 490 times and then stop ? Every one feels that an explanation of that kind

is absurd. Whatever we may be induced to think of the literalness of other sayings of Christ, here at least we are forced to the conclusion that Christ was speaking in a symbol; that, though the form of the answer was suggested by Peter's question, yet that the answer itself transferred the whole subject from the realm of the understanding to that of imaginative emotion, from the realm of limited maxims to that of the illimitable truths of the spirit. His answer meant--There is no limit to forgiveness between man and man.

That is no isolated thing. The story supplies us with a canon of interpretation. In it we find the manner in which Christ always spoke; always poetically, always symbolically, always in the region of the imagination. The last thing we are to do is to take Him literally, and the moment we attempt it, we miss His meaning. And the more you attempt it, analysing and arguing and building up Christian truths on this basis of a literal interpretation, the blinder you get to His truth and the more terrible are your mistakes. The only time when Christ Himself ever bordered on impatience was when men imposed a literal meaning on His words. It was not impatience; it was sadness; but it was sadness either with a touch of amazement, or with a touch of irony. Take one example. 'The bread that I give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.' 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' asked the Jews, taking his saying literally. The only answer Christ gave was to reiterate the saying in stronger words. Of what use would have been explanation? They would not have understood the explanation, since they could

not understand the saying. He spoke in this parabolic way to them, just because there was no use in speaking in any other way: 'Seeing'—that is, thinking they see—'they cannot see.' They have not the faculty necessary. Even the disciples murmured, 'This is a hard saying; who can bear it?' Then Christ, touched home by His nearest not seeing, gave a further answer, not explaining, but declaring the manner of His speech. 'It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing. The words I speak unto you are spirit and life.'

And that is the ground of all interpretation of His words. It reiterates all I have said. It tells us that all literal interpretation is interpretation according to the flesh: and the 'profiteth nothing' is equivalent to declaring that such interpretation is evil and brings evil. Of that we have a sufficient example in the endless evil to which the literal interpretation of 'This is My body' has led mankind. It has convulsed with storm and stained with blood the Church for centuries. It is at the root of all priestly tyranny, it keeps up incessantly that priestcraft and all its iniquitous results which Christ abhorred and fought against, and which hanged Him on the cross. No: if for nothing else, this short talk with Peter is of vast importance, because far clearer than from any other saying of Christ's we can infer from it the true principle of interpreting the words of Christ.

Now we consider the text itself. But one thing is first necessary to say, that it speaks of personal forgiveness, not of social or judicial forgiveness. It is not always possible, and, even when it is possible, it is not right, to condone

wrongs done against society. Even when repentance takes place, one cannot remit punishment, or readmit the offender. We cannot take back into our circle one who has been guilty of social or legal crime. To do so would injure the conscience of society. So far as a man has sinned against us we can and ought to forgive; but in the larger matter, the laws of society must have their way. The criminal must suffer social punishment.

Nor, again, does the text tell us to make a man aware that we forgive a wrong done to ourselves unconditionally. There is a condition, and that is repentance. We should forgive, be in the loving temper of forgiveness, and that always; but we cannot, with any regard to justice, make that forgiveness known unless there is some sorrow for the wrong. And that is to be done on the ground, not of demanding a condition, but of the uselessness of forgiveness unless the injurer be in the temper of repentance. As long as he is hard-hearted, forgiveness only does him harm, encourages him to do more wrong, nay, even still more hardens his heart. The parable that follows my text illustrates this aspect of the subject. The lord forgives his servant ten thousand talents. But the servant's heart is hard, and he will not forgive his debtor a hundred pence. The forgiveness falling on an unloving heart that cannot truly sorrow for wrong, has done evil, not good, and the Lord of the servant justly takes back his forgiveness.

These, then, are the necessary limits of Christ's saying; and observe they are limits which are contained

in the spirit of the saying itself, and which would not be contained in a maxim which should lay down fixed limits of forgiveness.

Peter's notion of personal forgiveness was that there was a certain time when we were to stop. 'How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?' 'Unto seven times?' and no doubt he thought that a wonderful number of times. It is the ordinary human way of looking at it. We think there comes a time when repeated wrongs license us to withdraw forgiveness; and we stop and say, 'I will not; nay, I ought not'—for we make a moral duty of it—'forgive any more.' It is a plausible view, but a tree is known by its fruits; and its results will tell us whether Peter's notion was right.

The first result is hardness of heart. When we cease to forgive, still more when we make it a duty to cease, the temper of forgiveness in us lessens, decays, and finally dies. And the temper of forgiveness is the temper of pity, and mercy, and love. With its loss, all those three beautiful sisters are also lost, die, and are buried in our heart. We only see their graves. And without them we are lost men, lost to mankind, and lost to God. We cease to care for the sorrows of men, and cease to rejoice in their good. We cease to be able to pray: how can we say to God, Forgive me, when we cannot say, I forgive? We cease to know what love is, and therefore we cease to know what God is. We cease to be able to enjoy the beauty of nature or art, for we cannot love, and nature and art work by love. And we are forced to live a hard, worldly,

cold and pushing life, and to boast ourself that we are freed from the deceiving influences of feeling.

Nay more, when these three sisters are dead, we have no guard against the evils which they oppose. Once we have said, 'I will forgive no more,' the step into revenging our wrong is easy; and from that the step into hating him who has injured us is easier still; and from the feeling of hatred to the act of hatred is but a step also. It may be—it only needs a few circumstances to make it possible—it may be that over the graves of pity, and mercy, and love, revenge and hatred and murder may lead their maddening dance. These are the fruits of St. Peter's notion of forgiveness;—that it is limitable.

Christ's notion is that, as between man and man, as it ought to be in the hearts of us all, forgiveness is illimitable—'Unto seventy times seven.' Try that view too by its results. It is not easy to forgive frankly; few things are harder. But being done, and done often, its very difficulty strengthens through habit the moral fibre of the soul, and strengthens it not in a rough, but in a beautiful direction, so that we are able to have joy in the strength we have won. At last, we become accustomed to this conquest over self and to this realisation of beauty, and victory is not only easy, but delightful. That is one result: moral power in a beautiful thing, and inward joy in it.

The next result is, that having, through this habit of forgiveness, brought love, mercy, and pity as living presences into the soul, they establish rule in it over the evil passions of hatred, envy, revenge, jealousy, and

anger, and finally end by slaying them and burying them in the heart. A man accustomed to forgive ends by never feeling these passions at all. He is always gentle, and that is to be always beautiful. He is always ready instantly to say, 'I forgive,' and to him that forgives much, much will be forgiven. That is another result.

Then there are two others—the soul that forgives, first, learns to love, and secondly, spreads a spirit of love. Love grows with its exercise, and forgiveness is one of the exercises of love. And when our hearts are full of love, then we begin to see God and to know Him. Why did Christ see and know His Father? Because He loved enough to say, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' We shall get nearer to the spirit of Christ, and closer to God's heart, by one ardent forgiveness of a wrong, even of the little wrongs you think done to you in everyday life, than by a thousand prayers. It is not so hard to see the Infinite Father, though men make it hard by words; but there is one way you can always see Him. It is by loving well enough to forgive wrong. 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy; ' and the mercy they obtain is house room in the heart of God.

And not only will you love God and get that joy from the habit of forgiveness, but also Man and Nature. When once you have really, with all your heart, forgiven a wrong or a fancied wrong, and have not one touch of anger, or crossness, or rancour in your heart, so uplifted a feeling of happiness comes that you cannot go among men without loving them. People you did not care for

before become interesting. You are bored no longer. Being good and loving, you see goodness and love in others, even where they are very hard to find. All human happiness delights you because you are yourself righteously happy ; your sympathy is indefinitely extended, because in forgiving you have got into the realm of the infinite. There is nothing like a heartfelt forgiveness to teach you how to love mankind, and naturally so, for you have learnt how to love the person whom it is the hardest to love, the person who has done you wrong.

And, of course, you love nature, if you have any faculty for that, just twice as well as before. There is a softness, a sweetness, a delicate feeling in you, a delightful sense of victory over self and wrong, which makes all you see and hear in nature like an echo of your own heart. It is not an echo, though it seems so. It is in reality love which moves in nature speaking to you, because you are in harmony with it, and opening out its heart to you. Why, everything is music then : how sweet the rustle of the million leaves—it sings a song you now understand ; how gay the flashing of the light on cloud and flowers and streams—it dances with the dancing of your heart ; how fresh and pure the mountain wind—it tells of the resurrection of life from sadness ; and your heart is risen out of the gloom of anger and revenge into a new life. Inwardly you feel, in having forgiven, and gaining love, as if you were a garden bathed in summer dew. Of course you love nature, and nature loves you.

And the final result is that you make a spirit of love

dwell round about you ; your forgiveness dwells on your face, flows from your ways, thrills through your manner, is heard in your voice. It is Christ's spirit which is in you and streams from you. And children and young people crowd about you and like to be with you, and men and women feel softened and made better, and old people are at ease with you and catch a gleam of youth from you, or seem to taste beforehand the breeze which blows over the immortal hills ; and all feel that love is among them, and that it is a beautiful thing and full of blessing ; and if they are angry or ill-tempered, and want to get a little vengeance, are made more tender by your presence, till they are insensibly led to forgive, lured into love by your spirit of love.

These are the results of following Christ's spirit of forgiveness, and I think they prove His view to be better than the view of Peter.

Now, lastly, see how all this bears on the subject of God's forgiveness of us. Is the principle laid down for man's forgiveness of his brother laid down for God's forgiveness of His children ? That question answers itself. If God tell us to have a certain goodness of spirit in us, and to employ it in a certain way when wrong is done, and also done to us ; and yet, when He Himself is in the same relation to His children, does not have that spirit or employ it—what value is His word or His command ? Of no value to us of any kind as coming from Him !

We are told, and told now, when there is a holy war beginning in behalf of the palladium of eternal punishment, with reiterated and brazen effort, that God's for-

giveness is limited ; that a time arrives at which it stops short, and He takes no more trouble about sinners, but, leaving them to themselves, secludes Himself among the saved to hear their songs of praise. Why this is the God of the Epicureans, who does not care for men ! And, were it possible, God, becoming hard-hearted in losing the spirit of forgiveness, would cease to be God, for He would cease to be good.

But it is replied that God must punish sin, or else He also ceases to be good. Certainly ; and so He does. Forgiveness is not the remission of punishment, it is the happy sense in us that God loves us and is working out goodness in us ; and that does not prevent, but enforce, punishment. Our sins bear their fruits, and we suffer for them ; but God, through the suffering, leads us to love goodness, and Himself as the Author of good. Punishment is enacted till it has done its work, and its work is work of love. He has forgiven ; but we cannot have the good of that forgiveness, nor feel its power in us, until we are heartily sorry for wrong, until we long to do better, until love of God because He is good leaps up like a fountain in our hearts.

Yes, yes, they say, but the impenitent are always impenitent ; the time comes when the day of grace is past, and the power of repentance is taken away. What ? Then God does not continue in the temper of forgiveness towards the lost ; and so far as they are concerned loses love ! That is a curius thing. Had He the temper of forgiveness, He would have love ; and if He had love, He could no more be without trying to lead to repentance His poor lost souls—and the wickeder

they were, the more He would try—than He could be without love to those who loved Him. We are driven then to say that God loses love, and ceases to have the temper of forgiveness towards a certain portion of the universe of Spirit. And then what becomes of God? At least he is not the God of Christ, not a Father. It is a libel upon fatherhood, and a libel upon God, to represent Him in this fashion. To say His forgiveness stops short, is to make it of the fashion Peter would make man's—unto seven times.

It is not true. He has forgiven : and because He has, He punishes and leads us to repentance, and then He takes us in His arms and blesses us with all His goodness ; and this work of His is infinite—unto seventy times seven. ‘Lord, how often shall man sin against Thee, and Thou forgive him? And all the orthodox on this matter, with Peter, cry, ‘Unto seven times’—and they deafen the world with their ungodly cry. But through all their jarring noise and their leaping on the altars they have made, comes the still, glorious music of Christ’s reply and Christ’s vindication of infinite forgiveness: ‘I say not unto thee Until seven times ; but, Until seventy times seven.’

[November 2, 1873.]

*THE SIXTY-THIRD PSALM.*

‘O God, thou art my God ; early will I seek thee.’—Psalm lxiii. 1.

THIS psalm, like many others, is one of those sudden lyrics that spring to life in a moment. The qualities of rapidity, of strong emotion, of irrepressible necessity of expression belong to it, and these are qualities which belong to so many of the Psalms, that they represent in literature one of the most wonderful collections of passionate lyrics in the world. They are for the most part personal,—extraordinarily so—and they are religious.

The religious lyrics were preserved by being connected with the carefully continued services of the Temple ; but I cannot doubt, as I read these Psalms, and feel the poetic temper thrilling in every word of them, that the Jewish people were lyric writers on other subjects than on that of the personal relations of God to their own soul or to their nation. But songs on other subjects, in a nation so specially religious, would perish with the year almost that gave them birth ; and only be preserved if a religious meaning of some kind could be given to them. We have one elaborate love poem in the Bible, celebrating the triumph of true and faithful love over the seductions

of a monarch and a court: 'The Song of Songs'—and a noble poem it is. There must have been many more of the same type, but none of them have come down to us. This only has descended, because, in strict analogy with many other poems that have reached a wide popularity, such as the legend of Arthur in our own history, the religious teachers of the people seized on it, gave it a religious centre, and a religious meaning. It has lasted, then, for precisely the same reason as the Psalms lasted; but it does more than suggest, it almost proves that which *à priori* we should have expected—that the Hebrews had a lyric literature of the passions as they had one of religion.

It has been worth while, perhaps, to mention this, for it makes us understand the Psalms themselves better, when we conceive of the greater number of them as written under the influence of passionate, or as I should prefer to call it, of lyric emotion. Very few of them were composed in the quietude of the study, or in recollecting meditation; they rush in a moment out of a pent-up source of feeling at the touch of some outward circumstance. To remember this, is the first necessity for their criticism or their comprehension; and the main thing it tells us to look for in any psalm, is some hint of the circumstances under which it was composed; for finding that, we find the channel in which the emotional feeling ran, and can afterwards discover its direction and its meaning.

In the psalm I speak of this morning we can only conjecture the circumstances; but there are suggestions enough of them to enable us to arrive clearly at the

kind of feeling embodied in it. It may have been written by some Jewish soldier who thought on God, in the march with his king against the enemies of his country, as he lay upon his bed in the tent, or stood sentinel in the night watches and looked round on a dry and thirsty land where no water was; who recalled Jerusalem where in worship at the Temple he had seen God in His holiness and known His power and glory; who when he had made his own prayer and rejoiced in God with jubilant lips, turned to pray for his king and country, called for the overthrow of their foes, and asked that his king also might rejoice in God.

Or it may have been written under sadder circumstances; by one of that dejected band who were led exiles from Jerusalem to Babylon.

He stays to rest at night among his weeping countrymen, and in the long night watches in the thirsty land they had to cross, he too would think of Jerusalem, and of the old times when he had seen the Lord in His holy temple, and, as he thought, found comfort and joy in the midst of sorrow.

Either of these might be its history. It was certainly under some such circumstances that it was made; and the *kind* of circumstances supplies us with a sufficient groundwork for our religious explanation of the psalm. The exact occurrences make no matter, for the emotion of the psalm, the things felt and thought, belong to that eternal religion of the heart which, the same in all times and countries, carries us across the space of a thousand years to this Jewish poet. The history of his soul is ours; our circumstances may

differ in detail, but in the same kind of circumstances we have the same kind of emotion. And as we think of this, we seem to know, and not without just reason, that the immortality of human nature is more than a hope, is the only truth that can explain a fact like this enduring community of spiritual feeling. Who can dare to say that the ever renewed youth of these religious emotions, as immortal as the ever renewed youth of love, dies when the heart that felt it beats no more, or the tongue that spoke it makes no more its music? That is the folly of pedants, who shut their eyes to facts out of their special sphere; or the miserable conclusion of the weak-hearted, who take their despair of life as the guide of their reason, or the tyrant of their feelings, even as the God they worship.

He stood alone, we will suppose at the tent door, watching the night. The light of moon and stars fell on a wild, grassless, unwatered country, spread far and wide before him. And the low indefinite sounds of the desert crept up to his feet, bringing with them the sense of mystery and awe, and sent their quiet with a touch of trouble to his heart. As usual, when nature began her work, the impressions made awakened the ideas related to them, and these in a Jewish mind would naturally end at last in God, in whom the Jew felt himself and nature to be contained. The mystery of night and solitude created a vague longing, the impression of the thirsty land deepened the longing through association with the appetite of thirst, and both became, wrought upon in that receptive moment

by the excited spirit, the longing of the soul for union with the mystery and love of God. ‘My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee’—the spiritual desire born of both—in a dry and thirsty land where no water is. Mark how not only the desire of water, but the landscape itself, is spiritualised to represent to him the barren life within, from which God has been too long absent. And the cry goes up, ‘God, my God, I seek for Thee !’

That is the deepest prayer of life; how deep none can tell but those who have doubted for a time whether they could pray it truly, whether there were One, or not, who could listen or reply. For there are hours when even that, the last beacon of the soul, seems to shine no more over the ocean on which our ship of life is tossed so wearily, and the darkness is that which may be felt. They are hours of a wretchedness that none who could feel their unutterable solitude have ever dared to paint; hours that have greater misery still in our being left alone—in the absence of Him who always makes solitude alive—with our own dead self, a dead and vile companion then. It is this solitude with self—this terrible knowledge that, in all that large portion of our life that we pass within and wholly apart from man, even from those whom we most love, we have no one to speak to, no one to lean upon, no one who will keep us company—that drives us back to God. There is no salvation from this state but knowing that He is with us; and out of the dry and thirsty land, where we the wandering without one drop of water to stay our bitter thirst, we cry, ‘God, my God, I seek for Thee ; my

soul thirsteth for Thee ; my flesh longeth for Thee.' That is prayer, and a mighty strength is in it.

It is a more common experience when some excitement of the earth leads us, not to doubt, but not to remember God ; when work, or love, or money making, or political or social interest, so enslave us, that we cease to link them consciously to Him, and thus lose their ideal character. Everyone knows how the world gets into our hearts, how the higher aims and diviner aspirations grow chill ; how the fine air that the conscience used to breathe grows dense in a life too much enthralled to earth.

It is then that God intervenes, for He is persistent: and it is often, as in this Psalmist's case, through nature that He does His work. Her mighty quiet rebukes our fevered life, her obedience to law our vain anger against difficulty, her earnestness our frivolity : and, being with her in a solitary hour, when the pressure of the outward human world is relaxed, we are hushed and ashamed, or, as sometimes happens, carried beyond ourselves into a thrilling and sacred joy, in which self and life's petty business are forgotten in the impression of an eternal peace. Then, if we have ever felt one touch of the love of God, we cannot remain absorbed in nature alone: the impressions made run up into a higher Cause of them than nature. ' It is not nature only that speaks and teaches me now,' we say ; ' it is the Voice of God my Father coming to me through the world in which He lives.' And the same cry arises— ' God, my God, I seek Thee : my soul thirsteth for Thee.'

Observe in these cases, as in that of the Psalmist

also, the strange truth, of profound meaning to us, that the soul, even before it has found God, while it yet thirsts, claims Him as its own—‘O God, my God: mine even while I seem to have Thee not.’ This is the unconscious faith of the heart, the faith as it were of despair, which before the will has time to act, before the reason can step in, recognises that God is the possession of the soul, and calls Him *mine*. What is that? Is it only the feeble heart of man that cries? No, more than that, far more. It is He Himself who has never abandoned us, even when we forgot Him. It is the Spirit of God in our hearts that joins Himself to our inarticulate, unconscious cry, and makes it more than it would of itself become; makes it claim God as ours, even before we find Him. The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

I think, to know that this is true; that God unites Himself to the unconscious longings of the heart and that He will always do so; that therefore prayer has not to climb heaven to bring Him down, but only to go into the heart to find Him there already—adds a wonderful hopefulness to life, and gives us the power to spring out of the darkest hour to renew our endeavour—often baffled, yet never beaten; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed—for He is our God: ours though we seek Him now in darkness; ours though we seem to thirst for Him in vain; ours, for though we lose Him, He never loses us.

So far we can easily make the Psalmist’s feeling

ours. What is the next step? Brought through nature to prayer, he remembers old days when God was near to him. ‘Once I saw Thee face to face, felt in the temple, when I worshipped there, Thy holiness and power over me, Thy glory in my soul. And it was better than life itself, and my lips broke out into Thy praise.’

Nature, observe, has now done her work, and she retreats. The soul of the man is now alone with God and communes with Him by memory. Though it cannot yet touch God in the present, it realises that it has possessed Him in the past, and the unutterable joy of that possession. The sacred remembrance deepens—does its healing, kindly work. As it grows more vivid, it steals up from the past to the present, enters into it, fills it, changes from a recollected to a present emotion, and once more that which was life and better than life becomes the actual indweller of the soul. God, in a glorious tide of love and life, streams in and fills the thirsty land, and the soul again breaks out into singing. Doubt and hardness of heart depart. Sorrow is round the Psalmist, but he forgets it; difficulty before him, but it seems nothing. He loses self, and bursts in the midst of sadness into joy.

‘Thy lovingkindness is better than life; my lips shall praise Thee.

‘Thus will I bless Thee while I live; I will lift up my hands in Thy name.

‘My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips:

‘When I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches.’

Is not that the history of many? In hours such as I have described, remembrance does its work with us also. We are seeking for God; and we recollect that once we worshipped, once we felt Him near us, once the world was full of Hinn, before the light of common day had entered life, before we had met the hardness of the world, the scoff of men, the chill and trial and apathy that come of overwork. In those old days we asked no questions about Him, but we knew Him in our innocence and our happiness. Perhaps, had we been then asked, we should not have said we were religious, nor thought much about God and our own heart. Yet, looking back now, we say, 'I did not talk about believing in God, because I never dreamt of doubting Hinn; I did not think much about Him and myself, but I know now that I lived in Him as an unconscious child and that the life was beautiful; His favour then was better than life, and all my happiness was praise. Would God that now those days were mine! When shall I taste that early dew again, and breathe that morning air; when shall I, in that unconscious peace of happiness, spring from the earth and sing my hymns at heaven's gate, not knowing that I am with God, but being with Him all the day? Never, never more.'

Yes, never more, in the same way, but perhaps in a better way. We cannot expect the same; for the spirit in that first religion was partly the spirit of youth, and youth does not come back; and it was partly the absence of pain, and work, and trial. And we are not the same since those three solemn figures have taken up their lodging in our heart. Indeed, so little are we

the same, so great is the change wrought in us, that if we could get back the early feelings, they would not satisfy us now. We have become men and women, and put away childish things, even the child's religion. We need now to be conscious, not unconscious of God ; we need One on whose breast we can lay our head in pain and storm, and whose heart we can hear beating in answer to ours. We need Him who will sympathise with sorrow as well as joy ; to whom we can entrust more serious thought and deeper feeling than youth can ever know. We need not only the love but also the wisdom of God ; and above all, communion—that deep, watchful, thoughtful, enduring, minute, large-hearted, just and tender friendship, at every day and every hour, which the consciousness of God within us establishes as the blessing and strength of life. Such conscious possession of Him in this close, divine way is the only thing which will satisfy our later years. It is this we cry for now, when we remember the past blessedness which was better than life. This is the boon we pray for now in the barren and dry land, where no water is. We did not need it, and could not have asked for it before.

And it often comes to us, as it came to the Psalmist, in such hours as I have described. It is rarely till old age a constant feeling, for we grow into it but slowly ; but in consecrated and rare hours it rushes into life, and brings with it a perfect joy. There are times—in solitude with nature when all our heart has been softened into receptiveness ; stranger still, in the very centre of deep sorrow ; sometimes in the

midst of profound joy when strong emotion has thrown wide open all the doors of the heart—that as deep a realisation of ‘*God with us*’ is ours as that which the psalm expresses, and we say, out of a full heart, ‘I will bless Thee as long as I live ; I will lift up my hands in Thy name ; my soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness ; my mouth praiseth Thee with joyful lips.’

These hours are new starting places for us in life ; their spirit follows us, they give us strength for many weary journeys afterwards ; their memory is a power in trial, a guard in temptation, a light in darkness, a life in death. For in them we know we have seized God, and that He will never let us go. Keep their memory clean, remember them in your solitary hours upon your bed, let them sanctify your meditations in the night watches.

The rush of joy ceases at the end of the sixth verse, and the meditative part of the Song begins with the seventh. The experience is over ; the trouble, the prayer, the recollection, the joy ; the poet begins to think over what has passed, and he expresses its result in the words I retranslate :—

Thou wert a help to me indeed,  
And in the shadow of Thy wings I now rejoice ;  
My soul trusted in Thee,  
Thy righteousness clings close to me.

The result was twofold. The sense of God’s righteousness as his own, the sense of joy in trust in God. And both brought peace into his heart.

‘Thy righteousness clings close to me ;’ that is a

glorious thing to say and to realise. It does not mean that God's righteousness is given to us while we ourselves remain impure, so that by a kind of trick on Himself God sees us as righteous. But it means this: that the writer felt that God's righteousness would never leave him till it had brought out of him all evil; that he knew now that this Divine holiness would cling fast to him for ever, and would finally make him wholly perfect. He had what the Puritan would have called assurance, and it gave him the profoundest peace—peace in which he could turn from himself and think and pray for others. It was because he could say, 'I know whom I have believed, and am confident that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day,' that Paul could give himself to other work than saving his own soul, could spend and be spent for Christ among men.

After such a storm, it is a joyful thing to have nothing to do, to throw oneself in utter dependence on one higher than ourselves, and say, when we are certain that the will is a righteous one 'Do with me as Thou wilt.' That is the natural desire of an exhausted heart. But evidently it may be carried too far, and then dependence on God is but another name for laziness. We may make God's activity in us the excuse for doing nothing, and fall into mere contemplation, and some have been found to call that special spirituality. It may be well at first, after we have received much help, to lie down in joy under the shadow of His wings; but we have no right to indulge in that too much: and if we do, the wings cease to overshadow us, and God teaches us that,

if we would keep Him with us, we must rise and be going, that true dependence is trusting in God for the purpose of helping man.

If He has been a help indeed to any of us, the true gratitude is not the high-wrought emotion of an hysterical heart, but to be ourselves a help to men—His children and our brothers. One clear result of dependence upon God, ought to be that we should cease to think of ourselves, our sorrows and sins, and give our thoughts and prayers to men. And in the spiritual progress of the Psalmist, observe how that occurs. His heart has won peace. Does he sit down to congratulate himself on his safety, to brood over his spiritual pleasure, to retire in isolation from the world, since God has chosen him? There are few selfishnesses worse than this pious selfishness, and if it last, all the good done is lost, and God retreats from the heart in dismay.

But, on the contrary, this man, being at peace, knowing that God had undertaken his life, that God was there within him, feels that he need not torment himself any longer, and being full of love, turns to pray for his country and his king.

But those that seek my soul to destroy it,  
Let them go into the depths of the earth ;  
Let them be given over to the hands of the sword,  
Let them be a portion for the jackal.  
But the king, let him rejoice in God ;  
Let all who swear by him make their boast ;  
The mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.

That is, let all who obey the King, who take oath to him, have cause to boast themselves.

The intense egotism of the beginning is exchanged for the patriot's prayer.

Not very loving, you may say, to wish such woe to men ; but you cannot demand higher morality from an age than it is capable of ; and for a soldier *then* to wish well for his foes would have been impossible. But while you blame this man—do you practically, if God has given you knowledge of Himself, act as well as he ? He has ceased to think of himself and thinks of his country. Is your Christian life as unselfish ? Do you act in a similar way, and as much up to the level of the demands of your time ? Do you pass away from a merely personal prayer to prayer and action for the good of the whole social body ; devote your life to assist great measures, to make life better for the weak and lawless, to labour towards the new birth of oppressed and sorrowful peoples ? Does your Christianity take in not only your sect, or your class, or your nation, but all mankind ; does your prayer go forth that all men may find God and rejoice in Him, that all over the wide world injustice, lies, oppression, may be stopped ? Then is your Christianity, and only then, on a level—in a just comparison of things—with the Theism of the Psalmist.

This, then, is the psalm. The appetite of thirst, the impression of the thirsty landscape in the lonely night, are taken up by the spirit within the man, and become a thirst for God. Then, in the more powerful spiritual feeling, nature is lost, and the man is absorbed in God. He longs to know and feel Him as once he did in better days. In the remembrance all returns : he

realises that God is not only in the sanctuary but here at the tent door. A deep spiritual joy, in realisation of the invisible presence, flows into his soul. 'God is here, here by my bed in the tent, here in my night watches ;' his thirst is satisfied, and he bursts into praise. It is praise for a righteousness which clings to him and becomes his, and praise for the infinite joy of trust. And then, the sense of being God's own care, of sharing in God's righteousness, of being at one with Him, lead him beyond, outside himself. He loses himself in prayer for others. The Psalm that begins in self-consciousness ends in self-forgetfulness.

[July 27, 1873.]

*THE SECOND PSALM.*

‘Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?’  
Psalm ii. 1.

THIS psalm rushes up clear as a fountain, and with its impetuosity, out of the heart of the most glorious times of the kingdom of Israel, the latter years of David’s reign, and the first few years of Solomon’s. At that time, as we may infer from the close and vital way in which God and the king are mingled together in this psalm, there was a real meaning in calling the kingdom a theocratic one; a term which, as time went on, became less and less true, and had even become less true in the later reign of Solomon. At that period the kingdom of Israel reached to a great extent. It had stretched its branches far and wide even in David’s age, assisted as he was by the best generals and by an army trained with great care and commanded by officers who had experience in almost every kind of warfare. Behind the army were a people ready to support him, who loved him for his origin, his romantic youth, his chivalry and courage, his poetic character, his justice, tenderness, and even his weaknesses and sins when they had been repented of in his grand

manner. By these, and by the splendid organisation of the various elements of the nation into a workable whole, David had won in war a kingdom which Solomon established by wisdom, and in peace. Jerusalem, lately made the capital, was now the centre of a small empire, on the outskirts of which were a number of subjugated and tributary states, linked to the empire by fear, but ready at any moment to rebel.

This was the condition of the kingdom when the psalm was written. With regard to its authorship, it does not seem probable that it was a psalm of David. It is too triumphant for an old man, much tired and worn ; and we are shut out from referring it to the time of the festival of the bringing of the ark to Zion after the conquest of Jerusalem, when, 'Lift up your heads,' that glorious song, was written, by statements within the psalm itself. The king mentioned in it is said to have been anointed at Zion ; David was not anointed there, but at Hebron. Again, there is no remembrance or allusion to David's past life ; the writer has evidently no past ; the future is all before him. David would certainly have made some reference to his long struggle, and to God's protection of him, if he had sung this psalm at his anointing. The real writer can bring forward no further favours from God than the inspiration vouchsafed him, his anointing, and the oracle spoken concerning his kingdom.

Nor has it the peculiar artistic colour of David's poetry, though in itself it is artistic enough. Its style differs as much from David's, as a picture of Titian from one by Tintoret ; its form is smoother, its imagi-

nation not so daring, its transitions not so bold and swift, as those of a song of David's. It wants that wonderful spontaneous rush, that outbreaking cry, which belongs to David's work. There is more of conscious art in it, more of settled composition, more of a literary school influence; less of nature, more of art. It bears the same relation to a song of David's that a song of Ben Jonson's does to one of Shakespeare's.

But there is a tinge of David in it; just such a tinge as might be handed down by a poet father to a poet son. It begins with the Davidic abruptness and with the same kind of abruptness; that sudden burst into words which we feel is the result of thoughts which, after long working in the mind, have at last reached that point when they can be no longer kept back from realising themselves in form. For all these reasons, we may suppose that the psalm was written at, or shortly after, the coronation and consecration of Solomon at Zion, and probably by Solomon himself.

The treatment and arrangement of the lyric is evidence that the art of poetry had been carefully studied at this time; it is a masterly composition. It falls naturally into four strophes, through the first two of which the enthusiasm and the swell of thought rise to a climax, while through the second two the passion ebbs to a peaceful close: and yet throughout, lyrical unity is strictly retained.

The king begins with an impassioned cry of astonished indignation, at the rising of the outlying tribes against him. 'Why do the nations so furiously rage

together, and why do the people imagine a vain thing ? The kings of the earth stand up and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, (saying) Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us.' This is the first strophe.

He passes on to express his own scorn of the rebellion, and his knowledge of God's scorn of it. 'He that dwelleth in the Heavens shall laugh them to scorn ; the Lord shall have them in derision.' Rising still higher in prophetic fire, he declares their ruin. 'God shall vex them, they shall be overwhelmed.' Then comes the climax in an exultant rush of triumphant faith in which God Himself is made to say—as if the declaration of the fact were enough to overthrow the nations—'And yet I' I—; for the I is emphatic—'I have anointed my king on my holy hill of Zion.' This is the second division.

After that the passion of the psalm subsides. The king relates in the third strophe the oracle pronounced at his consecration, the coronation challenge, as it were, to all the world that Israel knew. 'Jehovah spake to me'—

Thou art my son ; this day have I begotten thee.  
 Desire of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance,  
 And the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.  
 Thou shalt smite them with a rod of iron,  
 And break them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Still ebbing into calmer waters, in the quiet confidence of victory, but with a touch of solemn menace, he warns the subject nations to do homage to him, the chosen son

of God, lest they perish ; to reconcile themselves to him, that they may be blest in dependence on the theocratic king :—

And now be wise therefore, oh ye kings !  
Let yourselves be warned, ye men of the earth ;  
Serve the Lord in fear,  
And tremble before him in terror.  
Take wise counsel (or do homage), lest He be angry and ye perish,  
For quickly is His anger kindled.  
Blessed are all they who trust in Him.

This is the last strophe, and I have been obliged to retranslate it a little. It is a noble poem, like one of those lyrics that nature, poet of a million moods, writes for us in the sudden storm and calm of a summer afternoon. In a moment the cloud gathers, thick with rain, purple, with a heart of fire. It climbs the sky, and shakes forth the flaming pennant of the lightning ; flash after flash, roar on roar, repeat the battle, till in one heaven-rending thunderbolt the heart of its passion is expressed. And then it ebbs away to die in the golden west ; not yet surrendering all its wrath, still rolling its great cadences of sound ; till at last, not exhausted, but as one who has fulfilled its work, it piles its tomb of purple for the sunset to illumine with azure bars and golden edges ; retaining only of all its passion, not the fire itself, but the colour of angry fire, the stormy scarlet of dying conflagration. At last the evening star comes out to walk in peace, and the psalm of nature ends. ‘Do homage to God,’ it says, ‘lest He be angry and ye perish ; for His wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all they who trust in Him.’

We turn now to the psalm itself. The first thing

that comes before us is the faith of Solomon. It was faith that he was on the side of right and progress, though he would not have used those terms.

On the other hand, one might say that these nations were struggling for freedom, and were in their right. And no one can blame them for that, nor deny their right to do so. But the main question is, which side it was most for the advantage of mankind should get the better; and to this there can be but one answer. The dominance which a nation like the Philistines or a nation like Moab were striving for, was one in which a degrading and sensual idolatry would have got the upper hand over monotheism, and in which customs and ideas which were corrupted and corrupting would have gained power, and in gaining power, have delayed the advance of the world. Suppose they had succeeded, overthrown Solomon, and set up their kingdom on the ruin of Israel—that religion which, in spite of what has been lately and weakly said, was the best for the world, would not have then and there been given, the loss to the growth of the world would have been incalculable; on the spiritual side as incalculable as the loss would have been on the side of intellect and art, if the Eastern barbarians had overthrown Athens. Moreover civilisation was on the side of the Hebrews as well as the noblest religion. They had life, organisation, the elements of a fine literature, commercial energy, the power of giving form to a polity, in their race. Above all, they had within them ideas—those living things with hands and feet, creative, generative; the seeds of a vast harvest of the thoughts, with their

natural emotions, which inspire and console mankind.

That Solomon felt this is plain from the history. He felt God speak within him, believed that the future of Israel was knit up with the future of the world ; and, in that faith, demanded his enemies' overthrow and his own success as necessary, and expressed it as the decree of God. His expression of it was modified by the rough feeling and the cruel spirit of the time, and we cannot expunge that without violating historical truth : but, leaving that aside as the coarse human element, his words were, as a whole, the expression of God's decree. 'Succeed ! I must succeed. He that dwelleth in the Heavens shall laugh them to scorn.'

In this way we too should often feel. There are certain times when we are called on to contend for ideas or truths, necessary for the growth of man : when a voice, God's voice in us, tells us that, though men may furiously rage together against our words and actions, yet that we are on the side of the progress of the world.

Claim then God on your side ; let the oracle given to Solomon sound in your ears, believe that the truths you hold must conquer : know that those who deny them are given into your possession, however they may seem to win for a time the day. And though you will not now wish to bruise others with a rod of iron or break them in pieces like a potter's vessel, you will not hesitate to work their overthrow, nor to wish for it. They must either change, or be pushed aside, so as to do no more mischief. Give them the freest leave to express

their opinion, to defend their cause, unless they are tyrants who by force subdue whole ranges of men and compel the reluctant to their opinions. Against such we should encourage rebellion when it is possible ; but do not let the freedom you give prevent you from using every means which does not violate liberty to overthrow them. God and humanity are on your side, and your faith in that will give you power.

Again it was faith in himself as God's messenger which made the youthful king so triumphant.

Called suddenly in inexperienced youth to the loftiest duties in Israel, succeeding one whom the boldest might shrink from rivalling, how did Solomon feel ? Like Hamlet ?

The time is out of joint—oh, cursed spite,  
That ever I was born to set it right !

There spoke the imaginative northern nature united to want of any kind of faith, least of all faith in himself. That was not the temper of Solomon. He took up gallantly and eagerly the duties and the troubles of his life. He felt that he should feel himself great, just because the times were evil. ‘David, it is true, was dead, but Jehovah was not dead. One goes, another follows, but God is all in all. His power enters into me ; He is again alive in Israel in me. I hear the Almighty Lord saying to me, His son, I have anointed thee my king on my holy hill of Zion.’

Such was the heart, the faith of a Hebrew king. Such should be the heart, the faith of an Englishman. To recognise the duties of his life, and assume them gallantly ; to meet the troubles of life, and to feel more

noble, more of a man, because of their difficulty ; to be born to evil times, and to feel, by the very force of their evil, like one inspired ; and to do all, confident that God has chosen him out of all the rest, not to be better than the rest, or to do better work, but to do his own special work ; and to do it, knowing that God is doing it through him for man—that is the victorious element in a man's life, and it makes for him that text true—that he will remove mountains and cast them into the sea.

It makes him also a true man ; for man is most verily man when he believes that God is in him, when in that grand idea he lives and moves and has his being ; when he can say with Solomon, 'God has anointed me and I am king.' It was the faith in which Christ did his work, lived his life, and died. He felt that he and his Father were one ; his labour was his Father's labour ; his thought his Father's thought ; his words not his own, but His that sent him. 'I must do my Father's business. My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it ?' For what was true of Solomon in one of the highest hours of his manhood, that he was anointed as the son of God, was true in a far higher, in a perfect manner, of the perfect Man, the perfect King ; is true of any one of us, imperfect men, if we be faithful to our lineage, to our calling—if we be growing up into the measure of the stature of Christ's fulness. It was because Solomon, in these youthful days of his, felt this as he spoke, and rose for the time into the region of the higher humanity, that the words he

used here are used in the New Testament of Christ, the realisation of that perfect human nature which Solomon touched too briefly, too imperfectly.

It was no common work, however, which he had to do, nor was it work that could be done by a common man. He was set apart from mankind for the sake of mankind. On the day of his consecration, God had spoken to his heart an oracle: ‘Thou art My son; *this day have I begotten thee.*’

For on that day he was born into a new life with a higher range of duties, and therefore into a closer relation with God. Higher duties had made God nearer. Power given over his fellow-men had made him feel the need of spiritual union with the good Ruler of man. The day of his anointing had consecrated him to a work and destiny which made him a peculiar son of God. That is not without its meaning to us. The more power we receive or gain, the higher the duties laid on us, the firmer, wiser, and truer men we should be. The greater our work, the greater should be our devotion to the eternal Labourer: for only in union with Him, by love which brings forth holiness, can we make power productive of blessing, or the results of work permanent. This is God’s demand from us—that increase of power and work should be met with increase of righteousness and love. Have you fulfilled the terms? As God has given more influence to you, have your holiness, truth, love, and purity increased? As each new duty brought with it new life, and enlarged your sphere of work, have you felt God saying to you, ‘Thou art My son; this day have I begotten thee?’

It is on feeling and on realising a growth of holiness in proportion to the growth of responsible labour and duty that all the nobility of your inner life depends. For life is then harmonious. The more you become a prince with man, the more you become a son of God. The outward life with man and the inward life with God go hand in hand ; the latter adds the element of eternity to the former. It was for missing of this that afterwards Solomon failed. He had power, wisdom, wealth, but he lost righteousness : and the kingdom that began so brightly, ended in the dark. For true as it is of all men that increase of likeness to God should accompany increase of power and gifts, there is none of whom it ought to be truer than of the ruler. He is chosen for a special work, and how can he make just laws unless he be a lover of infinite justice ? How can he spread the truthfulness that binds society together, the purity which restrains the people into temperance, the self-sacrifice which is the guard of personal freedom, unless he be near to God, and know himself as God's. Of all men in the world, the ruler ought to be in the relation of the closest sonship to God ; that is, in the relation of the closest possible likeness of character to God.

And if he be such a man, to him is justly given empire. The heathen are his inheritance, the uttermost parts of the earth his possession. Force of cunning, power of armies and keenness of intellect, make kings here, but without goodness their kingdoms do not last. The real king of men is the just and true man, he who is ready to give up his life for love to men,

whose self-control is strong and who has noble motives for it. Such a king was Christ, such a king He is, and the time will come when over a regenerated earth His rule shall be unimpeached by men, and force and fraud shall give way to holiness and love as the royal powers. Then shall the psalm of triumph spring from the heart of the universe, and the words of God to Solomon be spoken again with deeper meaning: ‘Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee.’

There is no king now like Solomon. The theocracy has perished as an institution, though it lives as an idea. But every man of genius, everyone to whom we can give the name of prophet, that is, one who proclaims necessary and universal truth; everyone to whom we can give the name of seer, whose insight into the central meaning of things is clear, are kings, in their several degrees, of men, and kings by right divine, set apart from men for special duties and to reveal special truths which, done and revealed, give naturally kingly power. These men ought to be and know themselves as theocratic kings; rulers made by God, anointed by God to their work, and conscious of their rule as divine. When men of genius and prophecy recognise the law by which they truly live; when they take to themselves holiness of life, nobility of purpose, and are true as stars to their course; when they are unworldly of heart, careless of self in their labour, and do their work with the deep conviction that they are sons of God, and revealers of Him—then the world is at their feet, the uttermost parts of the earth are their possession. But if they deny their high calling, and divorce them-

selves from their sonship, their empire over men's hearts falls to waste. Nay, even their own genius corrupts, becomes false of eye and ear; power leaves it, it ceases to give pleasure and to do good; its work becomes sensational, and though it make a noise in its time, its influence soon dies, or only lives to be a death in men.

For the work of ruler and of genius and of prophet is one at root. It is first, to destroy evil. The nations who clogged the progress of the world were to be bruised and broken to pieces by Solomon, and one of the peculiar duties of genius is to crush and destroy the base ideas which corrupt, and the outworn ideas which delay the progress of mankind. It is secondly, to set up good by being the interpreter of God. Those who trusted in God were to be blessed if they would bow to the sway of Solomon, because his rule was a revelation of God's will. Being true to his vocation, he was the interpreter of God to his people. And that is the dignity and use of the life of genius, whether of politician, poet, thinker, man of science; to interpret Him who is the soul of the universe, the source of thought, the fount of beauty; and in interpreting God to bless men with new life, to bring them nearer to God, so that each man will recognise his relation to God and do his work

Ever as in the great Taskmaster's eye.

To such men do homage, for to despise their mission and deny their kinghood, is to divide yourself from the revelation of God in them, and to bring misfortune on your character.

And if these things be true of the truly great of earth, how much more are they true of Him who was the bruiser of the serpent head of evil, the perfect Interpreter of God. He was king because He was full of grace, of that given love which draws all men to love it; because He was full of truth, of that truth that abides in the breast of God, and which will prevail till it conquers all the lies of earth. Be warned and do homage to Him with the worship of imitation, aspiration, love. Then you will rise into true manhood and pass on to become divine in God. Blessed are all they who trust in Him.

Refuse Him, separate yourself from His spirit, and you perish from the right way. And then what will you seem to yourself, in the land where only truth exists, where God is all in all? A lonely atom in the universe of spirits, homeless and desolate; till your Father and your Saviour make you feel your need; and your bitter cry, wrung at last from your hardened heart, is answered by the rush of His love, and you hear and understand, with a joy born of the ages of your long resistance, His blessed words of rejoicing tenderness: ‘Thou, even thou, long lost and found at last, art My son; this day have I begotten thee.’

[February 7, 1875.]

*THE ROOT OF RELIGIOUS LIFE.*

‘For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision ; but faith which worketh by love.’—Galatians v. 6.

THERE are some cathedrals which seem, like that at Rheims, to have been built in a day, to have sprung complete, out of the ground, at the voice of an enchanter, so perfect is the oneness of design that reigns in all their parts, so harmonious with itself was the thought from which they rose. The one thought, I say ; for though each detail is a thought, they are all contained in one, as waves are in the tidal wave. They are parts of that one image of the whole, which, ere a single stone was laid, rose entire and distinct before the artist’s eye. Such buildings are the lyric psalms of sacred architecture.

The Epistle to the Galatians resembles such a building. It sprang into existence in a day. It reads as if it were written with a single pen, at a single sitting, without one pause ; it is a single unbroken jet of feeling and thinking, neither laboured, nor modified by after-thoughts, nor gone all over again, nor altered and polished. We can fancy St. Paul, after he had

heard many tales of the falling away of the Galatians from their first liberty, receiving one morning a last and a worse account than all ; and smitten to the heart with it, rushing to his room, dictating with fiery haste all day, finishing his letter and sending it off at night, lest one hour should be lost ; with the same force, decision, and fire, as hot within him as when he began it. That was the way in which he wrote it, and out of this singleness of thought, feeling, and impulse arises its unity.

Along with its unity, there is a rich variety in its parts. St. Paul's individuality has fuller play in it than in any other of his Epistles. It breaks out into quaint impetuous appeals, it crowds the writing with personal traits ; in every ten verses we are sure to find some touch of the fiery hour and the fiery heart. This is like those details in the carving, or in the side chapels of a great church, in which the architect has allowed himself to play, or to fancy, or to follow a rush of imagination within the limits of the whole, and in which we read his personal character.

Like all great work, this Epistle has its clear divisions, its steps from point to point, its orderly passage from beginning to end ; and yet we feel, so almost lyrical is the effort, that this order is not that of elaborate reasoning, but of poetic fire. The letter begins quietly, it ends quietly ; but it has in the midst its one point of culmination, into which all the passionate thought rises, and from which it subsides. That point is the text I have read. We walk from apse to choir, from choir to

nave and porch, and we find them all dedicated to the glory of faith in Christ as the Lord of the freedom of the soul. But the highest expression of the whole meaning of the building is where, in the midst, rises this text, the central tower of the cathedral, binding all the parts together, forming their point of union ; and yet soaring above them into a loftier region of thought, where controversy and logical distinction and human error and passion could not live ; where circumcision was nothing and uncircumcision nothing—the pure, blue air of the heaven where, with Christ, love was all in all.

Such is the Epistle. Why was it written ?

St. Paul, some time before, had come among the Galatians, and had preached to them his Gospel, freedom in Christ from every bondage but the bondage of love. They had been in bondage to sin, slaves to the vices, slaves to the thoughtless lives that heathen license had allowed. Christ had delivered them, said the Apostle, from that slavery. They had cast their old life away, and they lived by faith in Him that worked by love. Faith in Him meant the confession of their whole life that God's perfect goodness and love had been realised and revealed in Jesus Christ. Realisation of this thing made them love it. How could they believe in it and not love it ? But when they loved it—loved, that is, God's goodness embodied in man—it became impossible for them to serve sin. They might be betrayed into wrong, they might fall into temptation, but they could not stay in it. It was

abhorrent to the atmosphere, it died in the life, that now they breathed and lived. To believe in and to love goodness, and to find it in a person who shared in their humanity and whom they could therefore love with passion—that saved them, because it made their life and character new.

It is this faith, this love, said St. Paul, that justifies; these infinite, inexhaustible, inspiring, essentially living powers of the soul. Where they are, there is life, power, impossibility of rest in pursuit of goodness. God sees these fountains rising in our hearts, sees the rush of their waters, knows that they cannot be drained dry, and in His infinite way of looking forward and seeing the end, counts to us the righteousness which, once having begun, we are certain to gain through the working of faith and love; sees the river of spiritual action and feeling and thought which these perennial fountains are certain to produce, sees it swelling, widening, bearing on its bosom fleets of righteous dealing, and finally ending its unceasing streaming in the ocean of His own righteousness. This is the true meaning of the doctrine of justification by faith. It takes up into itself all that is true in the various theories which have been held. It even gives a clear and rational meaning to the doctrine of imputed righteousness. And it is no theological dream. It is the carrying out in the religious sphere of that which is commonly done in human life. Again and again, we count to those whom we love that which we are sure they will become, because in certain changes wrought in their character, in the entrance into it of certain

inexhaustible and living sources of feeling, we know the end as clearly as if it were already come.

This then was St. Paul's conception, this his truth. 'It is these living powers,' he said, 'by which you are not only counted righteous, but made righteous.' Then he contrasted his theory with its opposite. 'You are told that God counts you righteous, and that you are made righteous by the doing of certain fixed acts, and by conforming to certain ceremonies. That is not true. These things certainly have their place, and must have it. They are to be done and observed, and the faith and love which do not fulfil them are not true faith and love. But they are not the heart of life; they are not the living sap, but the leaves and fruit alone of the Christian life. They might be without Christ at all. The atheist and the heathen can have them. They need not spring from love; they may spring from prudence, they may be of the world. If you live by them alone, there is nothing to prevent you from becoming heathen again, even vicious again. No, you must have the living Christ-like powers in the heart which *cannot* cease to impel you onward. You must believe and love. You can exhaust a certain number of acts and ceremonies; but love is inexhaustible, and so is its work. You can measure your acts at the end of each day and be satisfied with them, and so limit the growth of the soul, and be content, and vain of your work for God. But who can count the impulses of faith or can limit its infinite outgoings? When was it ever satisfied with what it had done, when did it ever say, Enough; you have done all? It must advance, aspire,

work, for ever and ever. Have it, and the endless progress of the spiritual life is secured. Your life will never cease to grow up into the life of God. 'The water that I shall give you,' said the Saviour, 'shall be in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life.'

This was the Gospel He preached to them, this the legacy He left them. And then He went away. Close upon His heels came the Judaising teachers. 'Except ye be circumcised,' they cried, 'Christ shall profit you nothing.' Unless in the fold of the Jewish law, doing all its commands, living by its rule, following all its ceremonies—not touching this, not tasting that, not handling these—you cannot be saved.

One would think such teaching, after the freedom of St. Paul, would not be pleasant to the Galatians. But it had one element which gave it a charm. It was new; it was a change. There was Celtic blood among them, and they seem to have had all its qualities; to have been frank, impetuous, open to all impressions, very loving and ardent, but along with this, of an extreme mobility, easily wearied with any one phase of thought or feeling, tired even of good things if they did not change, passing like lightning from excitement to depression, and from depression to excitement, led away by the present, even in their affections, much more in their judgment.

Like men of such a character, they forgot the old teaching in the new. The new was new, and they took it with delight, followed it with that quick but transient energy that, now as then, belongs to their race. The

tidings fell like gall upon the heart of the Apostle. It was all in vain, then, that he had preached and taught. ‘O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?’ he breaks out in his passionate zeal and sorrow. He could not understand it; indeed, the strangest thing to St. Paul must have been his sense of the anachronism of such a belief for Gentiles. It was well for the Jews to cling to it. It belonged to them by tradition. But now, that in the history of the religion of mankind, this form of it (which had arisen so many years before, which had culminated and decayed) had been buried for ever in the grave with Christ; why, why resuscitate it? Christ had risen, but the righteousness which is by the law lay in His grave, dead for ever. Would they embrace a corpse? Would they go back a thousand years for their religion—a religion right then, under which men could then live freely, and develop fully—but which now would strangle, kill and destroy all life, freedom and righteousness? ‘In Christ Jesus circumcision availeth nothing.’

On the other hand, while he spoke thus boldly for spiritual freedom, there rose before him, as he wrote, its perilous exaggeration. Desire of change had led them into bondage. But the same desire, or the mere pleasure of opposing those who had thus changed, and getting a fresh excitement in that way, might lead others to transgress the temperance which is the prime minister of liberty, and to end in that unrestrained license which is another kind of slavery. ‘If faith is all’—so might they argue—and ‘works are nothing; if life is free, and laws and observances things that perish

in the using ; then let us do what we like, leave aside all the forms of spiritual life, join with the heathen in their games, live freely with the pagan world, and fear nothing. We have faith and love. It is enough. All things are lawful, all are pure.' It is plain that to argue thus would be to reach, through the path of Christian liberty, the old slavery of sin again.

And it is more than probable that such a tendency had arisen in Galatia. Those who still clung to St. Paul's doctrine of freedom would naturally be driven into exaggeration of it by this new Judaic doctrine. The spirit of opposition, the spirit of controversy, would intensify these exaggerations. Pride in their liberality would lead them to boast of it, to expand it, to pass its limits in the effort to make a show of it. 'We will prove,' they said, 'that we are free and strong. We will go to the idol temple, eat meats that have been offered there, and despise these weak and foolish brethren. We will let the whole world see how free we are.'

Therefore, St. Paul, fearing these things—and with justice—said 'In Christ Jesus, neither doth uncircumcision avail anything.'

And then looking at both, at formalism and license, at these two tendencies (which we find, as we read the Epistles, developed themselves in every new Christian Church), St. Paul saw that only one thing would keep them right, steady in the midst of these two conflicting currents—faith in Christ which worked by love. This text, then, the sum and crown of the letter that he wrote, takes up and resumes the whole of his argument.

And ever again and again, as we know well, these two exaggerations of the Christian doctrine have been found in the Christian Church. To-day they are almost as vividly represented, and the Apostle's warning cry as much needed. 'Except ye be baptised, ye cannot be saved; except ye believe that doctrine, in this particular way, Christ will profit you nothing. If you do not obey the Church, cries one—If you share in worldly amusements, cries another—you cannot live a Christian life.' Rules are laid down, limits are arranged; this outward thing is insisted on, this forbidden; till all spontaneity of act and all individuality of thought is lost. It is the slavery of the circumcision, and that it is not felt as slavery is all the worse. It cannot be denied that the men who teach and do these things are Christians. But they are Judaising Christians. They rob us of our liberty in Christ. They check the original growth of each man as a separate member of the Church of Christ, and inflict on it a wrong by limiting its variety.

It is true they do not teach directly that these things are salvation, or that the doing of these things wins salvation. I guard myself from that unfair statement. But they insist so much on them, and they make them so necessary to salvation, and their views fall in so easily with that tendency of human nature which is ever ready to exalt form above spirit, that thousands are carried away into this modern Judaism. The teachers themselves may not be slaves, but their followers become slaves. The teachers themselves may not think that these things avail for salvation without a

sanctified inner life, but their followers fall into that mistake ; and their ‘circumcision availeth nothing.’

On the other hand, there are those who boast to be of the uncircumcision, who drift into thinking that liberal views are by themselves Christianity.

If there is a dangerous delusion in this world, it is that liberalism in religious thought is in itself all that is needed for salvation. Unlimited by any restraints, unsupported by any forms, despising all observances, sharing freely in all the follies and evils of the world, in a confident belief that they can get no harm from them, many who call themselves liberal Christians fall into a semi-pagan life, and call it a Christian life. They boast of their tolerance, but it drifts into tolerance of absolute evil ; they boast of their freedom from forms, but they free themselves from conscience ; of their freedom from superstition, but it is a freedom which brings them into such contempt of those they think weak, that they really free themselves from love. They boast of their free handling of sacred things, but they lose all reverence ; of their carelessness of results in the pursuit of truth, but they lose the power of keeping truth. This is the uncircumcision which availeth nothing. Its deepest want is charity, and without charity liberalism is slavery. Its votaries are enslaved to their own idea of freedom.

Neither one nor the other avails. What then does avail to salvation ? This is our last question ; and St. Paul’s answer is : ‘ Faith that worketh by love.’ I will explain it briefly, but I must first say what salvation is. It is not freedom from punishment, that degrading

conception of it which makes Christ come only to minister to the selfish fears of men. It is not free admission into happiness, without anything being nobly done or endured, for the soul when true refuses happiness which it has not deserved, or at least striven to deserve. It is an ennobled and purified spirit. It is a soul in possession of high principles of action, and of a fire of love which sets those principles into fiery work. It is to live as a child in the very presence of God, to feel Him at every instant, to care for Him and know He cares for us, to see Him in His purity, and, in daily aspiration and effort, to grow like Him in character. It is to love men, to hope and to believe in them, as Christ did. It is to worship one thing alone with all the powers of soul and spirit, and to bend all life and thought and action into harmony with that worship ; and that one thing is the character of God revealed in Christ. It is day by day to know that sin is perishing within, that goodness is growing, and to thrill ever more and more with goodness. It is to feel triumphant over the temptations of the world to be false, or vain, or mean, or absorbed in the things which pass away. It is, in sorrow, sickness, trouble, disappointment, and betrayal, to possess the soul in a noble patience, to meet these trials with cheerfulness, and to emerge from the dark crucible of suffering, more softened, more refined and stronger than before. It is, as age grows on, to find the inner man renewed, day by day, as the body decays ; to be sure of eternal progress because that progress has already begun ; to feel Christ within us as inexhaustible undying life, and to pass towards dissolu-

tion with rejoicing, because we are sure, united to Him, to be united to our whole race in perfected humanity. And it is to feel when death knocks at our door, that he comes as the friend who will open to us the world in which the soul expands ; it is to smile in the face of the dark certainty and to pass away, saying with St. Paul, 'I know whom I have believed, and I am confident that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day.' This is salvation, and the things of the circumcision and the uncircumcision do not themselves avail for this. They do not even set it on foot in the soul.

It begins and is supported by faith. Faith in whom ? For belief in an idea unconnected with and unrealised by a person has never had and never can have any universal influence upon mankind. It is faith in Christ, faith that there has been and that there is one perfect being of our nature, whose character and life reflected those of God as a waveless ocean reflects the sky, and that that life and character were ineffable love, justice, truth, and righteousness. This is the conquering faith of life. It does save, it does avail.

It saves us from hopelessness. We want the certainty of there being a reality of perfect purity and love, and truth, in a world where we see so much of the contrary, and in contact with the changeable climate and miserable weakness of our own hearts. We want the certainty of one of ourselves having conquered the world, and sin, and pain, and death, not by passing them by, but by meeting them face to face, going down into their worst depths, and rising out of them

morally triumphant. Once we have that certainty, believe it, and know that it is possible for us, because possible to Him, the deliverance is so great, that our souls are strengthened to do and suffer anything. A hope that seems boundless, and that develops us into its own infinity, takes up its throne in our lives; and freed from fear and despair, we can go forward with the light of coming conquest shining in our hearts. That is the first step. The second is made when faith begins to work by love. That which has been an inward feeling, rushes into quick and fervent action; we become followers of His inward life, through love of it. And as we live it for the sake of love, all that is noble in us increases more and more, and this increase in turn increases love for Him who in making us like Himself saves us. Our whole inner life is saved. In outward life it is the same. We repeat Christ's outward life, for love of it, at an infinite distance, but with infinite aspiration. It is often a hard life, it is driven into the wilderness, it bears rejection and contempt, it is hung on the cross; but the love which inflames and urges it is unlike all other love. It is a love which knows no satiety, because it draws its fuel from that which persecutes and hates it. Beneath suffering, oppression, all the cruelty or scorn of its enemies, it burns, like the Greek fire, not to be quenched. Plunge it in the deep, more glorious it breaks forth.

If once we possess that love, and necessarily the faith from which it comes, we are free indeed; free from the bondage of the circumcision and of the uncircumcision; free from the chains of religious forma-

lism, or religious license; free to take out of either tendency what is best, and use it for the richer growth and ornament of our character. We can adopt any forms or ceremonies we think likely to support our spiritual life. We can be as strict as we like, for there is no chance of our being enslaved to forms or formalism, since we possess the spirit of them all. We can be as liberal as we like in life and thought, and without danger; for it is not the freedom of our own will that we have, but of the will of God. The love of Christ has made us free.

[July 9, 1876.]

*THE SURPRISE CHRIST FELT.*

‘Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?’

St. John xiv. 9.

THIS is one of the sayings of Christ in which we trace a twofold meaning. It directly answers a spiritual question. It indirectly reveals to us something of the personal character of Christ. It is theological on one side, full of human feeling on the other. The theologian only sees the direct statement that he who has seen Christ has seen the Father; but the reader who can feel as well as think, hears in the words the far-off note of intense emotion that through the direct and simple words comes to his ear, and knows that he touches the very heart of the man. Nor can he rest, so much does human outweigh theological interest, till he has in some way or other caught and realised the meaning of that faint, still, sad music which tells him a little of that which Christ was in Himself.

I remember once walking in spring in a small wood above the Lake of Geneva. The trees were in early leaf, the sky was clear and blue, a bright stream ran

rushing through the grass, and bent it as it ran ; below, the lake was sparkling in the sunlight, and all I saw spoke with almost too sharp a directness to the sense of beauty. But every now and then as I lingered in the dappled shade, there stole upon the sense, coming and going, now faint, now distinct, though always far and subtile, a dim odour which was so mystic and tender that it enchanted me, but the cause of which I could not trace. Again and again it flowed and ebbed around me with the winning wind, and I forgot the directer beauty in the indirect charm ; I ceased to see trees and sky and lake and the glitter of the stream in the grass, and pursued after this far-off thing. At last, full a quarter of a mile away upon the skirt of the wood, I found a small châlet with a garden, and in the garden a great number of old apple trees in a dazzling splendour of blossom, half an acre of snow and faint rose colour, valleys and hills of bloom that rose against the sky, like the Alps themselves in evening light. I had found the cause. The scent of the apple blossom is not strong, but when the wind passed over such a mass of it as this, it collected its odour and bore it through the wood, so that far away I felt its faint presence in the air.

In the world of books we are often touched and excited in a similar way. We are conscious of something beyond the book itself. In the very midst of writings on grave subjects intended to appeal to the pure intellect alone, we catch a subtile, far-off undertone of impassioned human feeling. In the form some sentences take, in the way some things are put, in the

in impression that whole pages leave, there is something which has nothing to do with the subject, something which tells that while the man was writing his thought, he was also feeling in his heart some other thing which ebbs and flows dimly throughout the sentences. Its cause is unknown ; but when felt, the interest in it is so great, that we forget the subject of the book, are enthralled by the secret human feeling, and cannot rest till we have pursued after and found its cause.

It is thus with this text. We know what it means as an answer to Philip's question, and that will form the subject of the latter part of this sermon ; but we can only guess at the meaning of the secret cry that underlies it, the cry which, coming out of the heart of Christ, is alone felt in the form in which the answer is given.

I may collect what I say on this subject under two phrases: The sensitiveness of Christ, and The surprise of Christ. With regard to the sensitiveness, it is almost impossible that all of you do not feel the piteous note in the reply. 'Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip ?' The pitifulness does not belong to the meaning of the question or of the reply. It all lies in the form of the answer. The tone of Christ's heart at the moment influences the manner, and modifies its form. And there is no one who has seen much of men, who has not often observed this thing, or known it in himself. We have been irritated, troubled by some unpleasant circumstance, and we meet some one we love, who himself has done nothing to vex us, and has nothing to do with our trouble. But in all our conversation.

the inward irritation appears, not openly, not in what is said, but in the turn given to our phrases. Or, a great joy comes upon our life, and our whole heart is singing. We meet then a common acquaintance, and so much does the inner song influence the ordinary phrases, that he thinks we have burst into friendship with him; or, under the same influence, we do common work, and it is done with such a glory of energy, that it becomes poetical. It is the inner life coming to the surface. Here is a case of the same thing. The heart of Christ was very sorrowful. He knew the result of His work would be infinite, yet in the present it had been a failure, and He was of too sensitive a heart to be able to live always in the future joy. Who does not know how the present pain is vivid often to the utter overwhelming of the future, even when one knows that the future will be bright? Does absolute belief in coming success ever blot out the distress of existing failure? Never—we know too well.

Again, Christ knew that the desertion of His friends was also at hand. They loved him He knew; but He knew also that fear would now overcome love, and that He would be left alone. And in the solitude He would have to face the enmity and contempt of a whole people for whom He was laying down His life. True, they knew not what they did, and He would have the comfort of being able to forgive them because He loved much; but along with this, had misunderstanding, and baffled love, and ingratitude, no sting? Moreover, the growing sorrow of a ministry which was not counted by years, but by centuries of feeling, was now accumu-

lating in the sorrow of a dreadful death, in which He would feel, through sympathy and yet alone, the agony and the sin of the whole world. All this, and more than our feeble hearts can dream, made trouble in the Saviour's heart. It was true that with the gloom Christ's heart had its eternal peace, its unspeakable joy; but these things were along-side of the darkness, and did not disperse it. Men know little of the human heart who say that two opposite feelings may not co-exist in it. The beam of joy is often made up of the seven hues of sorrow, the wave of sorrow is often made up of drops of joy. Nor did it lessen the pain that He knew that it was inevitable. It is human to feel the grief of the inevitable, however one may know that it must be. Men say that one ought not to feel sorrow then; that it is absurd. Nay, it is only God who cannot regret the inevitable—We must; and the true thing to say is, that the inevitableness of any grief does not make it less pitiable, but more so: but that it does make us bear it better, yet not feel it less.

This was the inner hidden life of Christ, and it must have made Him still more intensely sensitive than He was by nature. It needed but a touch to bring the inner trouble to the surface, not in complaint, not even in direct words—His mastery of self through holy will, through finished manliness, was too great for that—but in the indirect tone given to ordinary replies, in dim expression through things remote from the secret sorrow. The touch was here given by Philip, in a question to which Christ thought His whole life had

been one long reply: 'Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.'

On Philip's spirit, then, the long teaching had fallen dead. The friendship between him and Christ was intimate. It had been one of daily intercourse, and that intercourse had been filled with conversation, in which Christ had not been reticent of His plans or of the spirit of them. Therefore when Christ heard that question, He must have felt deep sorrow. He saw that all He had done and said had as yet borne no true fruit in the Apostles: their eyes were holden that they could not see; and to the misunderstanding of a whole people, was added the misunderstanding of friends. Christ answered kindly, tenderly, practically; He spoke directly to the point in question. There was no bitter reproach, no impatience, no roughness, but the gentlest words, said in the gentlest manner. But the inner sorrow was there, and the question fell on a heart rendered acutely sensitive by it. And through the form of the direct answer spoke the piteous life within; the sorrow of long misunderstanding swelled up for a moment to the surface and was gone again: 'Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?'

Again, not only was there sensitiveness, but surprise; and this kind of surprise is not uncommon to us, when things are very vivid to us and others do not recognise them. Some low voice of nature touches our secret heart, or some mighty movement of hers sweeps over its chords, and we are ravished out of ourselves, lost in our emotion. Then we turn to the companion

at our side; but his eyes are blank, unmoved, and so is his soul. We are chilled and shocked with surprise.

Love of another thrills our whole nature through and through, and we feel it in every thought, hear it in every note of our voice; it underlies every action, it speaks through all the world to us. It is a cruel surprise when we become conscious that the other sees nothing of it. It is impossible, we say. You do not see that I would die for you!

A man has brooded on a spiritual truth till his whole life is based on it, till its removal would be death to his spiritual being; till doubt of it would darken not only spiritual, but all intelligent life, and take away from his heart and its affections all their value. It is at first all but inconceivable when he finds doubt or disbelief expressed by others in these things, and nothing is harder than to get rid sufficiently of such surprise to be fair to those who doubt, or to act with prudence and tolerance towards those who disbelieve.

A philosopher has made himself master of certain truths of the order of the universe. He has tested them in a thousand ways, and they are more certain to him than his own material existence. With what infinite surprise he hears them challenged, or listens to those who ask questions about them, as if they were not certain. As in the former case, the tendency of the philosopher is towards intolerance, and scorn following on his surprise—scorn and intolerance strictly analogous

to that of the pious person, as difficult to avoid and as often fallen into.

It is so natural, under these circumstances, to feel this contempt and intolerance that one ought to guard against it carefully. It seems almost right, for it is in the cause of truth, but it is, in itself, evil, and it hinders the cause of truth to indulge it. We cannot help the surprise; but, instead of despising or being angry with those who cause it, we should remember how ignorant we ourselves once were, and teach in patience; we should remember, not the weakness of those whom we teach, but our own weakness, and how much we must ourselves, in many things of which we know nothing, surprise those who do know them. Astonishment must not pass into harshness or the contemptuous assumption of lofty knowledge.

Those who have felt surprises of this kind may know something of the wonder of Christ. To Him, that He was the revealer of and image of the Father was the one foremost truth of His life. Ever since He had sense, He had felt that, and it had grown with His growth and been the one proclamation of His ministry. The blind and the deaf in heart might, He thought, see and hear it, so intense, so vivid was it to Him. And now one of His hearers asks a question which suddenly makes Him feel that what is to Him as the sun in heaven is not perceived at all. What wonder that we hear in the question the note of wondering surprise? ‘Have I been so long time with you, yet hast thou not known Me?’

At such a time, as I said, our tendency is to be

angry, or to turn aside with scornful silence, or to be filled with the sense of wrong. Mark, in contrast with this, the tenderness of Christ, a tenderness which we hear in every word of the reply. There is a faint touch of reproach in it ; but it is the reproach of love, and it would not hurt the most sensitive heart. And this was said at a time when irritation might have been indeed excused, when His whole soul was darkened with pain and presentiment, when He felt with exquisite surprise that all He had ever said had been mistaken.

It is an image in one way of the tenderness of God. He might well be surprised with us, with the endless mistakes we make about Him, with our blindness and our foolish angers, with our neglect and our ignorance of His presence. He might well be angry with our wrong conceptions of Him, could He be angry as we are angry. But He loves us, and knows our weaknesses, our difficulties, and how hard we find it to get at truth or to resist temptation ; how hard to know His peace when our pulse is leaping, or His love when our little world is being swept by the tempest of pain. Only, when He has tried long to make us see what He means us to do, or how He wishes us to overcome life, or in what way we are to conceive Him as our God, and we will not see His meaning, nor understand His nature —He has often a way of His own of making us see, which looks like anger to our ignorant and wearied hearts, but is not anger. He puts us into circumstances, and they often are very sore ones, which take the film from our eyes and make us recognise ourselves and Him. And we do not like it, for it is bitter

work; but we shall thank Him for it by and by, and know that in it He has been saying to us, 'Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me?'

He has been so long beside us, and speaking to us, in the religion and innocence of youth; in the joy and love He gave us, and the thought of which, as we look back on our difficult life, brings tears that in themselves are God's voice; in the trials when our early faith and innocence departed, because we had to grow in knowledge of God, and to take our part in human life; in the difficulties in which we knew our frailty; in the voices that bade us leave sin, and that encouraged us to right; in the wonderful escapes we have had from great evil; in the loving-kindness He has poured upon our path; in daily watchfulness and help of which we take no heed—and we have been conscious of little of it all. So that when we wake to know Him well, we shall not wonder, looking back, to hear Him say, 'Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me?'

II. The answer itself to Philip's question comes before us now, and is a striking answer—astonishing, indeed, from its sublime boldness, and separated by that from the utterances of every other prophet, none of whom dared to say anything like this—'He who hath seen Me hath seen the Father.' Who knows Me, knows God; who hears Me, hears God. Nor is this an isolated saying: it is the constantly repeated thought of Christ, repeated in fifty different ways.

It was the great truth which He came to proclaim and live, that all true human existence was absolutely

united with the divine. We leave aside all discussion now about the Divinity of Christ, as the question is conceived in theology: we ask ourselves what was the idea which Christ had, and which had never before existed, and since His time has been too much forgotten? It was this: that humanity was absolutely identical with the Godhead, as regards all that is essentially real—that is, which is not transient, visible and sinful in humanity. Christ lost all mere self-consciousness in the consciousness that His whole being was of and by and through God alone. He knew Himself alone in God, and in this knowledge He was perfectly free from self and perfectly blessed. We never find Him wondering over Himself, thinking of His relationship to God, as if He were one person and God another. To His consciousness His works were His Father's works, His words His Father's words, His life His Father's life. He knows nothing of Himself as a divided personality from God. He assumes that he who sees Him, sees the Father; he who hears Him, hears the Father; and that He and the Father are wholly one, and He denies in Himself again and again all independent being. As some one has profoundly said: 'To him Jesus was not God, for there was no independent Jesus whatever; but God was Jesus, and manifested Himself as Jesus.' 'He who hath seen Me, hath seen the Father.'<sup>1</sup>

And this is the true ideal of human life; this is what we should keep before us, as the object of far-off attainment.

<sup>1</sup> Many will recognise these sentences as taken from Fichte's *Way to the Blessed Life*.

That was Christ's teaching concerning God and Himself, and therefore concerning God and man. 'All our life is God's life. We are in His hand and abide in Him, and no one can pluck us out of His hand. We are eternal because He is eternal, and when all mankind shall have arrived at likeness to Christ, it will have arrived at likeness to God. He who shall see the perfected humanity shall say, 'He who hath seen Humanity hath seen the Father.'

[October 14, 1877.]

*SIMEON. (1.)*

‘And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon ; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel : and the Holy Ghost was upon him.’

St. Luke ii. 25.

NOT one of the stories that belong to the infancy of Christ is more poetical or more human than this story of the old man and the child. The scene itself, the sunny Temple court, the central group of men and women, the rich garments of the priest, the altar standing by, the shimmering pavement and the doves that fluttered among the lamps, have always attracted art. More even than the scene, did the varied aspects of humanity stir the imagination with pleasure. Young motherhood was there, rejoicing in her first-born son, and offering Him to God ; and the mother was she whose character has inspired the whole of Christendom with love and reverence. Beside her stood her husband, and both were young in love, and life lay before them as yet bright and full of hope. Then came among them the old man Simeon, devout and just, almost done with time, but with his face lit with holiness, with thankfulness, with hope, and with the joy of longing that at

last had gained its goal. And as the centre of all—that which bound together motherhood, womanhood, manhood and old age—lay the child. Sweet was its face, and beautiful, and it bowed all hearts before its innocence. Nameless hopes filled those who looked upon it; great love centred in it; it clasped into one the feelings of the little group. And Simeon, full of prophetic instinct, and with that calm and tender joy which adorns an old age of goodness, took in his arms the child and blessed Him, and gave thanks to God. There the little one rested quietly, and the two extremes of human life met together—age and infancy, wisdom and ignorance, goodness and innocence, experience and thoughtlessness. And, strange to say, yet not so strange to those who know the power of a little child to speak to weary hearts, the old man felt unutterable joy and consolation rising in his heart, and broke out into a hymn of praise. ‘Lord, now lettest Thou,’ &c. &c. Not so the others. Mary and Joseph were too young to feel thus; they felt something else: the joy of having this little thing their own, beautiful human love of it; but they could not feel what Simeon felt—the deep comfort of long desires satisfied at last, the joy of knowing that all things were well before he went away from earth, the blessedness of being released in peace.

Full of these thoughts he blessed the child. Happy is the old man who has in himself the right to bless a child, who, drawing near to death, can lay his hand on innocence, and feel that his heart is pure enough to give it his blessing. Simeon had lived long and had

gone through many trials and much wrong. Nearly a century had laid on him the burden of its experience, of the griefs that burn, and the joys that wear out the heart ; of the knowledge of life which, while it strengthens, stains the soul ; of the deep trials which shake the roots of being ; of the bitterness that slow decay brings with it ; and, most, of the sins that come to men ; for he who longed for salvation so eagerly, so passionately, must have borne the weight of sorrow that wrongdoing brings. But he had conquered all ; the strength of God had been with him in his weakness, and now his heart was pure. He had outlived evil and made it good ; grief was dead, but not joy ; out of the knowledge of life had come, not scorn, but hope ; and trial beat no more at the door of his heart, nor did care sit mourning in its fields. The man was a conqueror. Out of the depths of his life he could bless the innocent child, and know that his blessing was worthy.

That is a scene that speaks home to our hearts. It tells us now in all the storms and sins of life, to so live that when we draw near the grave, we may have the right to lay our hands on the innocent face that looks up to ours and bless it in the name of God. Sin may have overrun us, and weakness crippled us for a time ; we may have been broken like a willow in the gale. It is not these that leave their curse on our hand and hold it back from blessing ; they are the common lot of man ; but it is these, when they have remained unconquered, when they still bring forth their inward fruits in old age, that chill the words of blessing on our tongue. Subdue them, cast their evil out of

your heart, learn the lessons God teaches you through them, and you will be able to bless others. Miserable in the passing of life is the man who dare not or cannot take a child in his arms and wish it good.

Then Simeon prophesied. Whence came this power? Two words tell it; he was devout and just. To be devout means to live always with the consciousness of God's presence; to walk with Him, as the old Scriptures put it, so that all thoughts and acts are thought and done before Him, and ordered so as to be in tune with His character. It means to live in worship of Him, so that honour is paid in everything to that which is God, to truth and mercy, justice and purity. And this, smitten into reality in a life, is a life of prayer. Now, when you walk in that way with anyone whom you love, you get a sense of how he will act or think, of how he will conduct circumstances; of the direction of his will; and if he has a place of mastery in the world, of how he will plan and arrange the future. And this sense Simeon and the prophets had towards God, through living always with God. They had a spiritual impression of what was coming; spiritual, I mean, because the things foreseen were spiritual, not because the impression was in itself supernatural. Exactly in the same way as a great politician who has lived in the midst of polities for many years, and knows the characters of the men who rule nations and of nations themselves, can predict events—so the prophets getting possession of the principles of God's rule of the world, through always abiding in God and knowing His character, were able to foretell, not

particular events—that would be supernatural—but the general course of things which would happen. That is, they laid down God's laws and principles of action, and applied them to the existing state of nations. The nation, they said, which violates these laws, or sets itself against these principles, will fall ; the nations which are on their side will last. Or, again, in certain states of society, they said, God will act in this or that way, He cannot act otherwise. Or, when the world has come to a certain stage, the conditions of which they laid down, God is certain then to reveal Himself through a teacher or a Saviour. This it is to be a 'seer,' a prophet, one who has insight into God's rule. And the first necessity for having that natural power, which many possess now as much as Simeon, is a life with God, a devout life.

But the first without the second, which is to be just, is almost useless. For this kind of devotion is liable to extravagances of feeling which dim the clear sight of things. There is nothing more common than the prophecies of pious men who map out the future, and who run into the wildest follies. They take up a view of God's doings which in itself is true, but, having no power of weighing circumstances or of judging the characters of a nation or an age, having no habit of justice—they apply their view of God's doings to things around them in so one-sided a way that they are always wrong. And being for the most part led away by violent want of charity through excess of feeling, they are deprived of that love which, by enabling them to see the heart of a man or a nation, is of the first necessity for right judgment. Therefore this new term

of *just* is needed to define the prophet. He must be a just man, and that means not only the habit of right doing which devoutness almost secures, but the habit of right thinking ; the power, through much experience, of giving to each event, each character, each impulse, first their real value and then their value in relation to one another; the power of entering into all the motives of national or personal action, so as to judge the act, not from its appearance only, but from its previous causes; the power of not yielding to the passing temper or the quickborn feeling which, whatever be their apparent fitness to the subject, are not materials for right judgment; the power of being able to wait for further light before speaking; and when all this is done, the further power of generalising from the whole, a principle, a mode of action, the way in which things will be. This is the second necessity for prophetic insight. And we may win it from close, but loving looking at past history, and from careful study of our own little lives, in which we may see, not seldom, an image of the great world.

There is a history in all men's lives,  
Figuring the nature of the times deceased :  
The which observed, a man may prophesy,  
With a near aim, of the main chance of things  
As yet not come to life, which in their seeds  
And weak beginnings, lie entreasured.

If a man then has this justice, he can foretell many things, whether he be devout or not ; but if to justice he add a life lived in God, he can prophesy—he can lay down the laws on which God acts, and enable others to see how the great movements of the world will go,

when the just thinker only is confused. He will be a true seer, as Simeon was.

Now, what was the result on Simeon's life of having this power? He knew that light, life and salvation were coming to the world, that God was to reveal Himself; and we see the justice of his thinking in this, that he did not expect that this light and salvation were at once to overcome evil. They were to come, but their victory was to be long delayed. The child was to be 'a sign to be spoken against.' Nevertheless the certainty of the coming of salvation had made the old man happy in his life. He waited, we are told, for the consolation of Israel. In calm of mind, all passions spent but one, the deep desire of the redemption of his people, the old man lingered on his way; waiting on time, and God.

It is hard to wait, and few can do it well. But God was with Simeon, and high hopes, and faith. God with him, he had no lonely hours, and it is the loneliness of the heart that makes waiting so bitter. He had that ineffable Presence with him, consciousness of whom would make life divine, could we but possess it; and the glory of God's life and thought had filled his heart with song. A tender hand laid him to sleep and blessed his dreams. A voice that he knew woke him in the morning. Love, hour by hour of the day, enwrapt him; what the sunlight is to a garden, God was to his life. To wait, then, was not hard; for every hour brought peaceful joy, and every joy was a new pledge of the last and most glorious joy.

But along with this life with God, and flowing from

it as a source, were those high hopes and faiths which were his companions in this abiding old age. It is these that, sitting with us by the fireside of age, and talking with us of their doings and their end, make the time pass quickly and happily. They bring the promises of spring into the midst of winter. Beyond the landscape of decay, and the earth that sleeps in the snow, we see, as great hopes speak to us, the landscape of resurrection, and mankind, like the woods, breaking into the rapture of a new birth. And we forget that we are old in the vision of the youth of humanity. We know that Simeon had these visitants, nay, these guests. ‘Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel.’ Salvation for his people, that was one of the guests in his heart. He loved Israel, as we love England; a love that deepened as he grew older and felt more strongly the greatness of her history and her work, the sense of God’s hand in her national life, in its glory and its fall. And, loving it more, in and for its fallen state—for vast pity bound itself up with vast hope—he longed for its redemption. At last, he saw that salvation, and then joy rode high within him, high as the full moon over the hill of Zion, and poured light upon his heart.

And then, at times, a still more glorious hope brought into the chambers of his heart a wondrous and wider vision; the vision of a world redeemed; light breaking, flowing, overflowing all the earth, the revelation of God’s character to the whole of men; ‘a light

to lighten the Gentiles.' And this revelation was to come through his well-beloved Israel, to be the work and the honour and the joy of his own people ; for it was to be the ' Glory of God's people Israel.' So not only love of country swelled in his spirit : something deeper, more unselfish, wider and greater was there ; love of all men and hope for them. Age had not narrowed his sympathies, nor shut his soul. Far beyond the limits of Israel he looked ; and all the exclusiveness of the Jew was lost. And in the expanded vision, not only joy was his possession, but the consciousness of grandeur. Sublime was the thought, and sublime the hope : so high and so sublime, that it placed him hand in hand with God who gave the thought.

This, then, was something of the old man's life. Waiting was no hardship to one so companioned. And when we think of it, we know what Isaiah meant : ' They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles.' An age of such waiting, such hope, and faith, and universal love and joy, filled in the midst of its calm with such divine enthusiasm, how beautiful it is ! It is the end of a noble life, devout and just, and lived in God. Nor is it so rare as we think. There are old men whom we meet, on whose face rests unsatisfied desire, and solitary sadness, and bitter restlessness, whose look at the past is steeped in regret for departed pleasure, whose look forward has no brightness and no sense of home ; and they teach us nothing but the pity and sorrow they awaken in us. Their lesson to us is the lesson of tragedy. But in other faces we read the

story of Simeon's heart, than which I think there is nothing more beautiful in the world, not even the brightness of youth which is so full of charm ; nothing which stirs in us more hope for humanity, which brings us nearer to God. As to immortal life, it tells us something of that problem. Such a life in old age makes us sure of two things: first, that the theory of our immortality in the race is not and cannot be the whole account of the matter, for here are facts which it does not account for : and, secondly, that if there be a God at all, annihilation cannot be adjudged to such a soul as Simeon's. The death of such a soul would be the death of God, for justice, and truth, and love would themselves die of such a violation of their laws.

At last the accomplished comfort came ; the long waiting was fulfilled. Simeon held in his arms the Saviour of the world, and all the past expectation mingling its passion with the present joy filled him to overflowing, and he broke into song ; a hymn of death and life. The peace of joy was its deepest note. On both the faces, child and man, that looked on each other there, peace lay ; but of how different elements was it made up ? One was the calm of the vessel that has not left the port, knows not the dangers of the deep, nor the watch in the hurricane—the other was the calm of the vessel which, after long voyages and storms, and beating to and fro in strife with the fraud and force of ocean, at last drops anchor, to sail no more, in the landlocked bay. All the world lay before the quiet child, all the life he had to pass through—trial, sorrow, battle with sin, and death, and hell. His

was the peace that comes before pain. All the next world lay before the quiet old man—the new life, the fruits of conquest, joy, freedom from sin, the Heaven of God's light and love. His was the peace that follows pain. It was a strange contrast, but not stranger than fact. Again and again we are set face to face with this meeting of extremes. It is like a dream sometimes, when in our own life, or in others' lives, in some sharp event, in some sudden conjuncture, we see joy and sorrow, innocence and guilt, love and hatred, death and life, peaceful heart and stormy heart, honour and dishonour, each as far apart as the old man from the infant, thrown together and ignorant often that they are together; for it may be only the bystander that knows enough of the lives of both to be able to see that they are close in the outward, but in the inner life as far apart as Atlas from the Pole. Such contrasts tell us strange tidings; we marvel as Joseph and Mary marvelled, and seem to realise, in the utter curiousness of the chance, in its unconscious irony, in its farce or in its ghastly tragedy, an inextricable confusion in the movement of the world. The web seems tangled to the death; the music a tuneless clash of sound. It is only in prophetic hours that, standing at a distance and seeing through God's eyes, we discern the vast pattern of the web, and know that its lines are precise; that, listening in the silence of the soul, we hear, far below, the harmonising theme that resolves the discord into an undisturbed song of pure concert, and understand that we are not the sport of chance.

Simeon saw the full embroidered plan and heard the

concented music, and he held the Master of the web and the music in his arms. He saw in the boy the Saviour of the world. A deep, deep joy overflowed his heart, and with the joy came unutterable peace. 'Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace.' It was the peace of satisfied longing. Longing such as his had been was in itself noble pleasure, for it was concerned with noble things. But still it was longing, not fulfilment, and as such had its pain and its unquiet. Now it was stilled in joy. Stilled, yes! for in such joy there is peace; the peace of having reached the uttermost desire, of needing no more, because the desire is for the highest good.

There are those on earth who never cease to long for their desire to be given them, and whose lives consume away because they know that their longing can never be quelled and their desire shall never be given them: and there cannot be a much sadder life than theirs, for the fierce flame of their one thought burns in all their doing, thinking, and being. But they know also that, if the longing were quelled and their desire theirs, with the excellent joy thereof there would also be peace, and with the joy and peace, swift and fruitful activity. For in its depths, in its supremest hours, joy is full of intense repose. But even in this there is not absolute peace, unless the thing desired is in itself noble, righteous, true, in harmony with the order of the universe and the soul of God. Those are happiest who, like Simeon, have such a lofty longing, free from self, from worldliness, from sin; linked to the eternal and the ideal world. Then, after long waiting, its answer will come,

and when it is fulfilled, through the unspeakable joy of it comes, not the wild excitement that follows on the attaining of earthly desire, but the peace that passeth understanding. The heart has won its home. It sits down and looks around it, and is happy, and comforted with comfort. All is good and fair, and sunshine, that it sees. It is warm, and sweet is its rest. 'I shall not be disturbed,' it says; 'I have no fear; I need snatch at nothing lest it should fly from me. All things wait for me, and will not go away. There is no deceiving mist to trouble me with suspicions of the realities of the things I love. By this homely fireside all is simple, honest, true and enduring. God is with me and with my joy; I am at rest and my joy none can take away from me.' We may not often have that joyful rest in manhood, though most blest are they whose quiet lot it is; we may not have it till old age, like Simeon; but when it is felt, the soul cannot contain its gratitude; it rushes into form, and the Christian hymn is born: 'Lord, now—now that I have won the last and best joy, now that the fulfilment of hope is here—now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace.'

That is fair! fair as the dawn on the summer hills. For in such a peaceful departure, filled with so quiet a force of joy, we think of dawnlight rather than of sunset. It is in truth a dawn, the breaking of the morn of a new and purer life. It is not death, it is life unclothing itself to be clothed upon again; it is not dissolution, it is expansion. It is not to see destruction, it is to see salvation.

O, may God, when our time comes, let us at last

loose in peace, having seen His salvation in our lives. Tossed as we are on a sea of troubles, sick with vain desires, made fruitless with the pain and paralysis of sin, we ask with impatience to be now released. ‘Lord, let me who am not Thy servant depart, for I am peaceless. Mine eyes cannot see Thy salvation.’ It is well God does not take us at our word. For, O it is better to wait till we can gain peace. And we can only gain it by living on, and doing right, slowly subduing wrong. Then and then alone is peace. We think it is in the grave, in that still country where the weary are at rest, they say. Alas! if we live again and take our stormy heart there, it will not be peace; and some there are who know that many, many years must pass, even there, before any rest can come.

We think it is in satisfaction of desire. No, not there, not there, my child. There is no peace but in seeing His salvation, in being devout and just, in rightness and truth of soul, in those longings inspired by God which fill the heart with active life and awakening faiths and hopes, which make not ashamed for they fulfil themselves. Only when we have found these things will come the time, when, like Simeon, we shall hold to our heart the Saviour, and looking back on our life, say, ‘I have seen Thy salvation in myself. Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace.’

And then, too, it may be, it ought to be, that we shall not be involved in ourselves alone; but a wider landscape comfort us, a deeper peace be ours. For half our unrest, and more than half when we are not in the midst of the entralling unquiet of wrong, is for the

sorrowing and sin-stained world. That unrest may also vanish away when we are old. When death is near, it may be we shall go into the temple of God, and see the Saviour who is the light of the Gentiles, and be assured of the victory of good. Then the hymn will rise in our hearts; peace and joy unspeakable be ours; and, stretching forth our hands to life, not death, it will be ours to say, ‘Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.’

[October 21, 1877.]

*SIMEON (2).*

‘And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against;

‘(Yea a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.’—St. Luke ii. 34, 35.

WHEN, on the day that these words were spoken, the mother came into the Temple to offer her sacrifice, and to present her son to God, there were but two souls in all the crowd in the Temple, only two, so strange is life, who recognised the high fate and glory of the child. One was a widow—women from the beginning were placed on an equality with men in Christianity—who had served God for many years in quiet sorrow for her early loss. Her sunshine came at last; not in joy for herself, *that* had worn out; but in rejoicing for the good of the world, the unselfish joy of an old age of faith. The other was he whose character and whose hymn we spoke of last Sunday: Simeon, who longed for the salvation of Israel. He saw the Lord’s Christ, and the crown of his life was gained in rest. That is God’s reward to His servants; not fame, wealth, honour, pleasure in life; but permission to

depart in peace. And with the peace, not quite its cause, but coincident with it and increasing it, was utter joy, joy in the vision of a world redeemed. Undimmed by any mist, the soul of the old man pierced through the clouds of time and saw salvation perfected. That too was God's reward. And when was this? It was when he stood on the edge of the grave; when decay had wrought so deeply that death was close, when the heart scarcely beat and the brain had but few tidings from the senses. That also was God's reward; an inward power which uplifted the immortal in triumph over the mortal, which, as the outward life decayed, renewed the inner.

When the strain of gratitude was over, Simeon turned to Mary with the words of my text. They are full of the wisdom of a long life, of that heavenly wisdom which is bought by long obedience. He knew that the result of the revelation of good is to intensify both good and evil, is to divide, separate and sift men, 'This child is set for the fall and the rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which' at first, since evil had then the upper hand, should 'be spoken against.' He knew that in such a strife, where evil and good were brought into sharpest conflict, the secret thoughts of men, set on fire by feeling, would break forth into open expression, and that their expression would deepen the battle. And his prophecy was nothing more than the condensed experience of life.

Then he turned to Mary, his friend, whose bright young motherhood shone before him, and the old man, wise in the sorrows which strangely have their root,

not in the evil and lightness, but in the goodness and love of women, foretold to her a sword, keen as a mother's love could make it: 'Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own heart also.'

We take the words to Mary first. Before they were spoken she was full of happiness. She had come into the Temple trembling with the deep pleasure of young motherhood, her soul filled full of natural piety, her heart leaping with joy. And when, moved still more by the old religious rite, she heard the hymn of Simeon over her boy, that He was to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and her heart recalled the worship of the Gentile kings and the star that led them to her dwelling; and when again she listened to the words, 'the glory of Israel,' and could not but remember the story of the shepherds, of the light which dazzled the midnight, and the heavenly host that sang at her Son's birth 'Glory to God in the highest—then all her joy rose to spring-tide in her; as once before when her long-concealed thoughts, touched into life by Elisabeth's greeting, broke into her song of praise. Her face glowed, imagination took up the music within her, she pictured for her Son triumph over evil, victorious success over her country's foes, the happy life of a Redeemer, the throne of His father David, the Gentiles coming to the light of Israel; for all these dreams hovered in the minds of the Jews, and more at this time than ever before in their history. Joy then and triumph filled her soul, but she was silent. Always a quiet, self-contained woman, keeping her thoughts in their strength, pondering them in her heart.

Simeon saw this lightning on her face, saw her mien transfigured, and with the wisdom which has outlived weakness but not sympathy, turned and touched her joy with the warning of his prophecy. ‘A sword shall pierce through thine own soul.’ It was cruel, we think; it was pitiful to dash her young delight with cold. That is our first thought, and it might be a true one, had the sorrow she was to suffer been ordinary sorrow. But it was so dreadful a pain that she needed to prepare herself, needed the warning. Her joy was too great at this moment to be destroyed by the words; it was only chastened by a shade of impending sorrow, so that when the pain came it was not so great a shock. Nor did the shade make the joy really less. Joy was only lodged deeper in the heart, made more intense —a secret, silent possession; nay, the very dread of its loss made her handling of it tenderer, and her love of it greater. By both, by joy and by the shadow of sorrow, she was exalted, raised from the girl to the thoughtful woman who kept things in her heart and pondered them.

Soon Simeon’s prophecy was fulfilled. She saw her Son go forth from the quiet of the village with high hopes, and at His first return to His home the people tried to kill Him. For a time things seemed bright, but as she followed His ministry with the passionate love which motherhood has for a son who claims also by his character deep reverence, she saw Him despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, hated and driven to death. Day by day the sword pierced her soul; day by day its sharp edge was

whetted by love and fruitless indignation. Can we imagine how that must have worn life away? And then the end, the hour by the cross, when she knelt apart, silent to the last, seeing Him die so cruelly—the mother's heart pierced in twain. No wonder she died early. No wonder Christendom has sung to her, painted and graven her, as the Mother of Sorrows.

Well, we say, it is the common fate. All have sorrow, and this world is nothing but sorrow, and its little joys only make its sorrows worse, and there is no good in sorrows. We see her in the sunshine of the Temple, herself all sunshine, and yet this was her fate. It is useless cruelty. Is this the good God who rules the world? That is a natural, but a foolish cry. For could she have seen beyond, could she have seen the world blest, nations civilised, a new impulse given to intellect and art, the burden of sin lifted off a myriad miserable men, the world born into a new life, through the sorrow and life and death of her Son, do you think she would not have rejoiced in her pain, rejoiced as she now rejoices? And we, looking at her life and her Son's, know of a truth that out of suffering nobly borne for love of man, good comes to all. Involved in our pain, we know nothing but that we suffer. Yet the history of Mary's sorrow is the history of all sorrow. Good flows from it to the whole, and when we see that good, we shall rejoice that we suffered. No sword pierces the human heart but the blood that streams from it heals the nations.

I pass on to the general declaration of Simeon. 'This child is set for the rising and fall again of

many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be spoken against.'

In Christ and His life good is set before us, and—we are told here—for our fall and upraising.

How is He set for our fall? That seems very strange. It is not God's purpose that the revelation of good produces fall. The logic of Calvinism has laid that down; but a logic which, in insisting on God's justice turns it into injustice, is an accursed logic. We must seek any explanation rather than one which shakes the central pillar of the universe, and turns God into a Master of evil. No, the real explanation lies in ourselves, in what we know and see men do of their own will. Good and evil lie before men, and they choose evil. They know there was a time when they might have stopped and said, 'We will do this no more.' They know they went on, and then finally resolved steadily to do wrong. They put aside God's interference—for He did interfere—and thought it half officious; too busy to look after goodness, they turned one to his farm, another to his merchandise, another to his marriage. Why should they prefer another world to this, why think of sacrifice or duty when pleasure's cup was full, and youth's blood leaping, and every voice of nature and man singing to them like a siren, to enjoy life as their own wild will led them? On they go, step by step, till at last, wrong becomes the habit of the soul; and not God, but their own will, drives them into the tone of heart which cannot see or receive Christ.

~~Yes~~ There is a state of heart which naturally turns

away from or hates the life of Christ and the spirit of its work. It may be reached through steady hypocrisy, which, being a lie, hates truth ; through steady self-seeking, which cannot see God, for it only sees itself ; through steady clinging to sin, which living in hell, loves absence from God ; through steady lightness and irreverence, which abhors the solemnities of righteous doing. That state of heart cannot recognise Christ. His voice is strange and dull or jars on the ear as hateful. There is no kinship between Him and it. When His goodness is flashed upon such men, it sends them into violent hatred of it. He is set for their fall. But it is their own deeds that have brought them to that condition, not God's will. *This is the condemnation—that men loved darkness rather than light : why ?* —because their deeds were evil.

Plainly then, if we wish to rise into a new life and a higher one when the revelation of goodness is made to us, if we wish Christ to be set for our rising, the first thing to do, is to love light ; and, in order to love it, to make our deeds good. Never mind having high ideals, until you have got your daily actions and thoughts right. We have no business with ideals till we have got some ground for them in common goodness. Simply order your home life, your business life, your morning, noon-day and evening away from wrong doing and thinking, and keep to this effort, and then you will begin to love light ; then, when Christ comes to you, you will be able to see Him. It is a simple promise, but it is eternally true and sure: ‘To him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I show the salvation of God.’

You will have the tone of heart which will enable you to recognise light. It is the Publican's: deep humility, sense of the need of a Saviour—'God be merciful to me a sinner.' It is the Centurion's great faith in Christ's power to heal the heart. It is the Prodigal's quick and steady purpose to go to his father. It is the spirit of loyal obedience to what we know to be right. 'If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.' It is truthfulness of character: 'He that is of the truth, heareth My voice.' It is instinctive love of love, sympathy with what is beautiful in the giving away of life for others: 'My sheep know My voice.' We must be akin to Christ before we can receive Christ. To such, when He comes home to the heart, when we feel Him rushing on us, He comes in resurrection power, set for our rising. And we rise, shaking off our sins, our dark thoughts, the burden of our sorrow, the besetting of self, the curse of indifference, impatience and sloth, into a new life. It is like the unbinding of the earth in spring.

Thus is Christ set for our rise and fall. It is a solemn thing to watch a man when that testing comes to him. A duty is laid before him, its goodness clear as the day. A sorrow darkens his life, a trial rushes or steals to meet him; and in the sorrow or the trial, what is right and loving is unmistakable. The hour strikes when he is called on to choose between two ways of acting, and he knows God is in one and the devil in the other. What is this? It is Christ set before him for his rise or fall; Christ come to reveal his inward thoughts, his inward strength or weakness. It is

a judgment hour; and years of evil fall, or of righteous growth, rest upon the hour.

And still more grave is it when Christ is set before a nation for its fall or rising again. So is He set before us now. A great contest is waging, in which whatever we may think of the motives or acts of the two powers, of what they each have been and are, the contesting ideas are quite clear. On one side is oppression, cruelty, and slavery for a people; on the other side, there is deliverance from these things for that people. No national interests, no possible present motives on Russia's part, can confuse this fact; liberty is on one side, slavery on the other. The choice which now lies before England, as to which side she will take, is fraught with the deepest consequence to her. In it Christ is set for her rise and fall.

Practically speaking, then, the revelation of goodness increases not only good, but also evil. Salvation and doom are correlative ideas: they march together. The baptism of the Holy Ghost and the baptism of fire go together. When God purges the floor, the same act which gathers the wheat into the garner burns up the chaff. Judgment and love are two sides of the same thing: and which of the two any man receives, depends on the heart with which he looks on the revelation of Christ to his soul.

Nor is this a theological figment, standing by itself. It is the law of the whole universe of thought and act. No great idea, great as true, ever entered into history, or into science, or into art, which was not set for the fall and rise of men, which did not bring with it at the

same time condemnation and redemption. When the idea of the liberty of conscience entered Europe at the Reformation, when the idea of the political liberty of man was formulated at the Revolution, when the idea that experiment was the only test of scientific truth came into the realms of theory, when the idea of free trade was shown to the world of commerce—precisely analogous results took place to those I have described in the sphere of religion. Those who could see the light rose into a higher political, scientific, and economical life; those who could not see it were lashed into opposition to it, and fell deeper and deeper till they met ruin. All great ideas are set for the rise and falling of men, for life and for death.

Of this law the strongest instance in history is that which accompanied the coming of Christ. (His ideas made the world into two camps. It was strange the dividing power they had. When one of them fell into a company of men, into a city, into a nation, it acted on them as an electric current acts on water; it separated their elements, and separated them with uniformity and constancy, according to their good or evil character: Christ's thoughts decomposed a compound world. And when they had divided men, they deepened that division by awaking passion in their hearts, passion for or against the thoughts; and men so stirred revealed their thoughts.)

In great emotion men lose reticence. That which lies deep, which either hypocrisy or reserved feeling has hidden, rushes into words on the lips. Have you ever watched men in a room when one of these impassionating

ideas suddenly enters the conversation? One by one they take fire, and ere long everyone is saying what he thinks, disclosing his character in the way he speaks; even the most prudent, the most silent, is at last swept away. In the same way Christ's thoughts and character and life wrought on man. Their result, in Simeon's words, was that the thoughts of many hearts were revealed. (While He lived, that was plain enough. Men could not meet Him without disclosing what was in them. The Pharisee dropped his cloak of hypocrisy and stood forth, the loud-voiced enemy of justice and mercy. The Sadducee could not help revealing his unbelief.) They were both forced to judge the works of Christ, and they said they were works of the devil--driven, you see, into hatred: Christ set for their fall. At other times, men's consciences were forced to speak, in spite of themselves. When in their cowardly cruelty they brought Him the woman into the Temple, at one word of His their hearts spoke out, and they slunk away ashamed. In like manner He made the humble and silent heart declare itself, and realise its desire of goodness. Poor Zacchæus, who had never dared to hope that he was good, spoke to Christ, and found out his heart. Peter, who had thought too much of himself, but who was true, found out he was a sinner and ran to seek righteousness; fell at His feet and said, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' The Syro-Phœnician woman could not leave Him till she had poured out her faith like water at His feet. Nicodemus could not rest till he came to find the Master of divine knowledge.

Thus He attracted and repelled. One scene brings both together, the scene in Simon's house. The sinful woman could not bear delay till she had proved her love; the goodness in her urged her to Christ's goodness. Simon, who looked on, despised the repentance of the woman, and the kindness of Christ. All he saw was, that Christ could not be a prophet, because He allowed a sinner to touch Him. One was attracted, the other repelled. The good was made sharp in one, the evil in the other; the thoughts of both were revealed. That story is the best commentary on the text.

Nor has the power of Christ's spiritual thoughts ceased to do this kind of work. When they come to us, they divide our compound being into two camps. They set the good in us in array against the evil. They make us know what is good in us and what evil, and that quite clearly. They reveal our own thoughts to us, set them in a clear, dry light. And that silent, inward war begins in us which is the miniature of the great world-war of good and evil outside of us. Sometimes it seems, so much are we three persons in one, that we can sit apart and look on at the strife of our good self with our evil self, and wonder which will conquer, and admire how sharply each has been set over against the other by the work of some separating idea. And it is then, when we can so consider the inward battle, that we realise most in thought the struggle in the great world of man, which, existing in every separate heart, makes itself felt in history as the universal war out of which is to come the solution of

the problem of evil. There too, it is the ideas of Christ which cause the war. Is self-sacrifice or self-seeking life? Does God live and care for us as a Father, or are we the children of chance or evolution alone? Are all men brothers, or are they not? Is the world going on to life or death, to destruction or perfection? Is evil or good the master? Is it better to aspire or to be content with our limitations? Is a man's, a society's, a nation's life, is the life of the whole world, to be directed in all matters, social, intellectual, political, artistic, national and international, by self-interest or by the interest of the whole? These questions are placed before men by the ideas of Christ, and they are set for the rise and fall of men; and by their working, the battle of mankind is decided.

And through all, through the solitary contest in each man's soul, and his own choice of good or evil, through the contest in every community, in every nation, in the whole world, men and nations rise or fall, and the silent separation ever going on, accumulates the materials for the last great judgment when this dispensation of time is over and another shall begin. That day is not what has been pictured in poetry. It will be the magnificent vindication of God's ways to men; the clear, vivid, unmistakable revelation of the holiness and justice and truth of God. Men *shall* see then. The time of doubt and casuistry and shadow will be over; all thoughts shall be revealed, and we shall know ourselves, and know God. Once more Christ will be openly set for the rise and fall of men. By the revelation of His holiness alone the good shall be irresistibly

attracted ; the evil, till they find out their evil, irresistibly repelled. There will be no caprice. In accordance with inevitable law, in accordance with the voice in men's own hearts, will the judgment sentence of the Son of Man be given.

[March 23, 1873.]

*THE SYRO-PHœNICIAN WOMAN.*

‘And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David ; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.’—St. Matthew xv. 22.

WE find ourselves with Christ in this strange story beyond the northern border of Galilee in the land of the heathen ; and a woman of the neighbourhood, a Syro-Phœnician and a heathen, having heard of His healing powers, came out to meet Him, and seeing Him, believed in Him as a messenger of God, and ran and cried to Him, ‘Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David ; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.’ And He—the soul of gentleness—answered her not a word ; and afterwards, when He spoke, repulsed her with harshness of speech. The story is remarkable. It stands alone, in apparent contradiction to the whole character of Christ ; and being unique, it demands investigation.

There is an historical reason (connected with His mission) for His severity. It was of the first importance that as long as He remained on earth His work should seem to be confined to the Jews. Otherwise it would not have taken root. His purpose was to found an universal kingdom ; but the Jews among whom He

laboured, and who were to be the carriers of His Gospel to the heathen, could not now have received this truth. They were bound up in exclusive theories, which set outside the pale of the Gospel the Gentile nations. The prophets had given many hints of a larger kingdom, but they had fallen dead upon their listeners' ears, or had been supposed to mean that the Gentiles would become Jews, and so belong to the theocratic kingdom. That they should be saved, that the Messiah should belong to them as Gentiles, was an idea which could not then take root. It was with great difficulty, even after the coming of the Holy Spirit, that the Apostles admitted the idea. If Christ during His lifetime had preached the unlimited extent of His kingdom, He would have repelled even the Apostles from His following. He was then bound to check any advances on the part of the heathen to share in His personal teaching, lest He should imperil His whole work. It is an example of that wisdom, that foresight, that grasp of the whole of the future, which is so rare among reformers, so much abused by persons who love impetuosity, but which time, as it goes on, justifies so completely. It is another illustration of that saying of Christ's which explains so many things in His life, 'I have many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now.'

Therefore, on the whole, He restricted His mission to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Further, in this case He had a special reason for dwelling on the restriction. We know from His own words that at this time He wished to remain hidden and to keep apart from public work. He was also on the borders of the heathen country, and

if He had thrown Himself, as a healer and teacher, among the Phœnicians or Canaanites, all the quietude He needed, not for His personal comfort, but for His work's success, would have been at an end. Multitudes of heathen would have flocked around Him, and what would then have been the result in Judea and Galilee? It would have been the utter overthrow of all His influence over those on whom He relied as His successors; and no good would have been done to the heathen by the transient impression made on uneducated hearts by wonders of healing. In every case, it would have been the last imprudence, considering the circumstances of the case, the time, and the place, to encourage the heathen to flock around Him. He said then these harsh words, not only for the heathen and for the Apostles, but for the sake of the whole of His work. But though He spoke thus, He did not finally repulse the woman, nay, He intended all along, since He saw her faith, to give her the relief she wanted. It was nothing to Him personally that she was a heathen. He knew, and had long before conceived the thought, that His Gospel was to extend to all. He had personally assisted Samaritans and pagans, and He had taken care in words to sow the seeds of that universal mission which He afterwards gave to His disciples—‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.’ In His very first sermon at Nazareth, He had chosen two heathen as those whom God had in old times specially sought, and His life was attempted for His rashness. The centurion's faith had made Him declare the salvation of those who should come from the east

and west. At the feast He had spoken to the Greeks. He had revealed the spiritual God to the Samaritan woman, and shown the beauty of the spirit of mercy by the example of the Samaritan who was neighbour to him that fell among thieves. Afterwards He said, 'Other sheep I have which are not of this fold, them also I must bring.' These things plainly show His intention: and they also show the wisdom which only suggested, but refused to declare, His intention. They were enough to show that while, for the sake of His larger work, there was a restriction of His healing and comforting work to the Jews, the Gentiles were hereafter to be taken into His kingdom. And this story illustrates the whole principle of Christ's work in this matter. He was apparently cruel to this heathen woman. He repulsed her. But as in the larger view His intention was to embrace those whom He temporarily set aside, so here His intention from the beginning was to bring salvation to the woman.

I turn now to what the story reveals to us of the personal character of Christ. It admits us into one of those curious and subtile phases of character in Christ which when dwelt on and understood make Him very near to us.

We ask why He said these harsh and cruel things so unlike Himself; and the answer we may give is this: That He desired to get to the root of the woman's nature — a very human and natural desire. We lose the sense of what Christ was by removing Him too far from our common human nature, by thinking that He could not share in many of our ordinary impulses because He

was so near to God—as if the divine on earth would not become far more intensely human than anyone of us can understand. Men have sought the explanation of these seeming harshnesses in the realm of theology, but the answers do not satisfy the facts. The historical explanation I have given does not account for the roughness of the words. Let us turn to our own lives, and see if we cannot find any analogy which may help us to comprehend them.

Have we never, when we have met anyone who interested us, and who made demands on us, at first repulsed those demands; and when he became importunate, been silent and kept him in suspense, not in order to reject his prayer at the end, but in order that we may get a further insight into a character which we think will charm and influence us, if we can know it well. We know we shall know it better, if we are reserved, silent, even harsh at first, for this will force it to open itself in further speech, will kindle the person into that passion in which character reveals its depths. That is frequently done, far more frequently done by women than by men, when it is done between equals; but frequently also done in various ways by teachers to pupils, even by parents to children. It seems unkind and harsh; but it is not—for the impulse has either interest in the character, or affection at its root, and the intention is to give all and far more than is demanded, if the test be stood, if the character is worth the gift or able to receive it.

That partly illustrates what Christ did here, but in His case the end sought was not only the natural and

human end of discovering a character, but also the discovery of the character with a view to its development and ~~redemption~~.

Again, if we love a person dearly and we are not sure whether they love us, it sometimes happens that we catch a glimpse of something which seems to tell us that we are loved, and the hope of discovering this precious secret is so strong that we are carried away into disturbing them into showing it. We keep a silence which distresses us while we keep it; we are harsh, even cruel, while we hate ourselves for being so. Nor do we do this of set intention, but are swept away by our passion into it for the time. We will do anything in the world which may force to the surface the treasure we long to find, and in the eagerness to reach the end we consciously use means at the rudeness of which we should, in cold blood, be dismayed. It would be unpardonable did we not love, but our love excuses the means, and they are excused.

That illustrates, only illustrates, that which Christ did here; for His object was not only to find out that the woman loved and believed in Him, but also to kindle and to sting into vivid life the spiritual power of faith which He saw in the woman's heart. For not till that was kindled could He do her the kindness she asked. To awake that, Christ gave trial, as God gives it, and the waking of faith was well purchased at the price of a little pain. The woman's soul was ennobled for ever. For though a heathen, and probably remaining so, this was born in her—deep trust in One whom she felt to be goodness and loving-kindness, and whom

she worshipped for these things. She gained an idea of God which freed her from fear of Him and from superstition for ever. That was one result of Christ's work. Along with this work and its pleasure there was also His natural human delight in developing the beautiful in character. He saw the faith and love in the woman's eyes, knew them at once as He always knew goodness, was delighted with the vision, and determined to bring the lovely thing to light. So He kept silence ; but His face was not silent, and the woman read His face. And He spoke harshly, but His look could not help its tenderness, and gave contradiction to His words, and the woman believed her heart against her ears. Then, thought Christ, I shall be still harsher, and see if faith lives against what seems contempt. 'It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs.' But even for this harshness the woman's instinct was still too strong ; she saw, through the rough words, the love of Christ, she felt His longing to relieve her through the veil which seemed to hide it ; her own wild motherhood and its passion joined to deepen the perseverance which would not relax till she had forced from Christ release for her child. And then, when humility was added to faith, and faith to the beauty of maternal love, and that exquisite touch of nature came from her lips, in which the seeming abjectness is glorified by the love which prompted it—'Truth, Lord ; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from the master's table'—Christ could do no more : ravished with joy, thrilled with the vision of such beauty in human nature, He cried out, with an outburst of delight, 'O woman, great is thy

faith !' We can fancy His whole face lit with enthusiasm—the inward light of joy, now that the self-imposed restraint was removed, rushing in waves of pleasure over His whole expression—‘Woman, take anything from Me thou wilt. All I can give is yours.’

This was one of those moments of intense and rare joy which came to Christ when in contact with human nature and which, when they came, must have transfigured Him. Those who looked on Him then must have seen His face as it had been the face of an angel. A moment, too, of some surprise, for was not the woman a heathen ? Was it natural that she should have more trust in Him than those of His own people to whom God had spoken for centuries, and from whom, He the voice of God, had as yet won so little faith ? Yes, there must have been some such surprise as that which He felt when He turned on the disciples after the centurion’s speech and said, ‘I have not found so great faith—no, not in Israel.’ But greater than the surprise was the joy. It was the unselfish joy of a pure heart in goodness ; the deepest, loveliest joy there is. We seldom have it in any perfection, for our sense of sin dashes our delight in goodness with the sense of sorrow ; but we have felt it sometimes, in hours when, taken beyond self by some pure emotion which we have successfully put into noble action, we come into contact with something nobler far than our own act. Exalted by our own state, we are able to pass beyond it still higher into that perfect delight in goodness which knows neither envy nor even emulation, which only knows the vital glory of the highest life. For this is

the eternal life of God—intense abounding joy in the eternal contemplation of goodness. The joy which transfigured Christ, when His cry, ‘O woman, great is thy faith !’ came rushing to His lips, was the image of the everlasting joy of God in goodness, the joy which we should spend our lives in trying to give to our Father.

But Christ as He said these words had another cause of joy. For He saw behind this woman’s faith the contradiction of His own words, ‘I am not sent save unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’ He saw in her one of the first-fruits of that mighty army of faithful hearts which He was to gather out of the Gentile world. He saw in the simple, childlike, impassioned trust of the woman, the same simple reception of the story of love by the uncultivated thousands in all lands whither the Gospel should bring its tender tale of healing and of life. He saw that the Gentiles should come to His light and kings to the brightness of His rising. Far, far away from Himself and His sorrowful life, He was swept into the future, and through love of the race placed in communion with the whole race. The cross seemed nothing to Him then, its shame was despised, its pain and loneliness eclipsed in joy. O, how wonderful ! How little the poor woman knew what she had done ! So often do the simplest, most ignorant, and poorest bless the lives of the great !

Such may be something of our joy if we will. We may be lonely in life, much sorrow may fall to our lot, our days be crowded with anxiety ; but we can never be quite overcome by life, if we can with Christ’s

trust, look forward to the regeneration of the race, and throw ourselves into the joys and sorrows of its battle. For there our isolation perishes, and we find ourselves partakers of a communion which consoles and cheers. Our loneliness is peopled with forms which our love and piety, our reverence and faith in men, have made living in our hearts ; a crowd of sympathies make our life tender and beautiful. Our heart thrills to every hope and every movement of mankind ; its chambers are musical with the laughter, and their air made tender with the sorrows, which soothe and bless mankind. Its walls are hung with the storied pictures of the fortunes of humanity. The guests we have are the ideas and the hopes, the aspirations and the dreams which impel and brighten man. And as we thrill with these things, we forget our own little pain and go on our way with some triumph, keeping step to the music of the march of the world. And when, like Christ, we light upon some vivid form of goodness where we least expected it, and see faith, or love, or bright hope, rise out of some dark corner of the world, then all our life in man intensifies ; we look forward with prophetic hope ; we rejoice as He rejoiced then, with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

So far for the explanation of this difficult story. It seemed worth while trying to see into its secret, not only on account of the 'still, sad music of humanity' in it, but on account of the insight it gives us into a special aspect of Christ's character. But there are two spiritual lessons also hidden beneath its surface, and in touching on these I shall conclude.

It illustrates the way in which God often deals with men, and it illustrates the faithful way in which men should accept that dealing.

There are some who need kindness to make them love and trust God, and God is kind and makes life smooth for such. But there are others whom persistent kindness would weaken, whose character needs sharp treatment and development. And, in truth, all of us need at times this kind of treatment. The cross must fall upon our shoulders, all the more if the education of joy has been ours in youth, else we cannot, or very few of us can, become mature. When trial comes to us, whom long prosperity has made indifferent or assuming, and we are so keenly touched as to feel the centre of our life tremble, God often makes no answer to our cry of distress. The heavens are brass to our prayers and it is very bitter to pray and to be answered never a word ; no help, no comfort, no light, no strength. It seems strangely cruel : but for the first time we are wholly thrown upon ourselves, forced to ask, What am I worth, what is my life and what is it for, what powers do I possess and how have I used them ? What does God mean to me, and what have I to do with Him ? And such questions are the root of all effort, the root of all Christian life ; and in asking them, and passionately seeking their answer, we become men and women and put away childish things. We cannot rest till we find a reply ; and for the first time, perhaps, our whole life becomes a strong persistent prayer—rather, an impetuous cry. God must and shall hear us, and reply. And a reply does come. But it is often this : 'I am not sent

save unto the lost sheep of the House of Israel. I have nothing to do with you, nor you with Me.' That is, we fall into doubt of God's having any care for us; we think we are outside of His love, outside of the religious circle where His special sheep are folded; dogs who have nothing to do with the sheep, for whom Christianity is unsuited, to whom God and His Fatherhood mean nothing. We hear, as it were, the voice of God saying to us, 'It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs,' and we are indignant or overwhelmed with His seeming contempt. For a time we often fly into wrongdoing or infidelity, or a giving up of the whole matter.

But if we are true-hearted, that temper does not last, and either here or elsewhere God will not let it last. We cannot rest in that condition; it is a state which itself urges us to practical work; it strings the bow of our energies, it keeps us living—and living towards higher things. 'If there is no heaven for us,' we say, 'let us make our earth as true and good as possible.' And in doing that we make another step forward—we learn what doing and working mean; we learn not to surrender life, even in hopelessness; and though we do not pray by name to God, our life is constantly on the watch, our heart awake, our soul knit in resolution, and our will concentrated towards an ideal; and that in itself is prayer and perseverance—the prayer and the perseverance of faith which does not call itself faith, but which is infinitely more intense in reality than that sleepy trust in God which, believing that all is right, goes drawling through an

inactive life, without an ideal, without a noble sadness, without a burning desire to live and know we live.

One day the ideal is revealed—the desire attained, the sadness turned to joy. It is when humility is added to this hidden faith. It is when, softened in heart, we look round and say—out of a heart full of love to others—‘I may never have comfort in believing, I may always be in difficulty, I may remain outside the fold—but I will not envy those who are more blessed than I; and though I may never sit at my Father’s table and eat the children’s bread, yet I know He is my Father still. The crumbs let fall by others He allots to me, and I take them with a thankful heart. I need my God, and the little His wisdom gives me; with that I shall be content; only let me feel that it is He who gives it; yes, *that I will believe.*’

Strange, then, will be your joy; strange, the exulting rush of your heart into full communion with God; strange, the delight of hearing, after long warfare, long desire, long sadness of an unquiet heart, that word in your soul which tells you that everything you ask is yours. ‘O child, great is thy faith! be it unto thee even as thou wilt.’

[June 1873.]

*SPIRITUAL EXHAUSTION.*

‘The Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart.’  
ROMANS x. 8.

THESE words were spoken to men who were speculating on mysterious subjects, and they touch, of course with necessary change, one of the troubles of this time. For many of us are wearying ourselves with endless speculation on the loftier subjects of thought in religion. It is not wrong—nay, it is right, if such is our nature, to speculate on these high matters; but if we do nothing else, then we injure our religious life, and lose the use of lofty speculation. Pride or despair follow, but chiefly exhaustion of the spiritual faculty, and oftentimes its death.

How we can retain the pursuit of high mysteries and truth, and not lose ourselves in them or be cast away in their despair, is my subject this morning.

I can best explain what I mean through an analogy between natural scenery and our pleasure in it, and spiritual life and our pleasure in it. There is a tendency in some persons, which is part of the general current of present thought and feeling, to enjoy vast scenery only, and to care for the study of vast spiritual questions only, so that we reckon ordinary scenery as

uninteresting, and common Christian life as dull. The immense subjects of God and immortality, and evil, and man's origin, freewill and destiny — these and others are the Alpine region of the spiritual life. We wander among them as we wander among the Alps for the first time, amazed, enthralled, delighted, overwhelmed, depressed. All the spiritual being is kept on the stretch; we have neither repose nor quiet, we only feel excitement.

Whether in life with nature or in spiritual life, exhaustion and its results follow on such a straining of our powers. 'If we give the imagination,' and I quote what a great authority has said with regard to the enjoyment of natural scenery—'too many objects at a time, or very grand ones for a long time together, it fails under the effort, becomes jaded, exactly as the limbs do under bodily fatigue, and incapable of answering any further appeal till it has had rest. And this is the real nature of the weariness so often felt in travelling from seeing too much. It is not that the monotony and number of the beautiful things have made them valueless, but that the imaginative power has been overtaxed; and instead of letting it rest, the traveller, wondering to find himself dull and incapable of admiration, seeks for something more admirable, excites, and torments, and drags the poor fainting imagination up by the shoulders. Look at this, and look at that, and this more wonderful still—until the imaginative faculty faints utterly away, beyond all further torment or pleasure, dead for many a day to come.'

Almost in every way, that is analogous to the exhaustion of the spiritual faculty when it is wholly given to the mightier questions of religion. We are ravished at first by their grandeur and their solemn beauty, and neglect the wayside beauty of the Christian life. But after a few years at most, the mystic glory dies away. These things are too much for us. We are bewildered by the multitude of questions which one after another, like a thousand paths from one centre, open out from each of the great problems. Who can count the dust of thoughts which fly around the question of immortality?

We try to seize them by imaginative feeling, supported by faith, but after a time, feeling faints with its own strain; we try to reach them by the intellect, urged by spiritual desire, but the intellect recoils, baffled by the infinite. We struggle on, but a growing hopelessness is in our hearts. At first we refuse to see this hopelessness, but conscious of it in unguarded moments, we dread to think that we are falling away from the religious life, and in the dread, lash the spiritual faculty to its work. It rises like a jaded animal, to a supreme effort, and for a time of strained excitement, keeps up the swift race of early life, but it is the energy that drops dead in a moment, like the stag whose heart broke by Hartleap Well. One day all power of this kind of religious thought vanishes as if we had never had it, and we cast ourselves down on the road of life in despair. Once and again, even then, we shake off our sorrow and look up, hoping that new light may come, and with it new life. But there they

are—the unpitying eternal summits! They will not change their inscrutableness for all our grief, nor relax their unapproachable serenity.

Then follows the last result of all our one-sided effort. The spiritual faculty dies for many a year to come. It has died of the anger of the heart which we now feel against God for having placed the impossible, we think, before us, and now—in denial or contempt of all we once loved—we take refuge in the region of the understanding, where results are attainable and secure. Or it has died, when half regretting the enjoyment that once was ours, we turn to the enjoyments that we still can have, and in the pleasures of the senses or the appetites, lose the infinite desires and the sublimer hopes of man. There are few of us who have not seen or experienced these things.

What is the remedy? Listen to the same authority I have quoted, when he gives the cure for the exhaustion of the imaginative faculty.

‘Whereas, if the imagination had only been laid down on the grass, among simple things, and left quiet for a little while, it would have come to itself gradually, recovered its strength and colour, and soon been fit for work again. So that whenever the imagination is tired, it is necessary to find for it something not more admirable, but less admirable, such as in that weak state it can deal with; then give it peace, and it will recover.’

That lesson which, when once learnt, prevents for ever weariness in great scenery may be directly transferred to the life of the spirit. Turn, when the exhaus-

tion I have sketched threatens to tire, and then to kill the spiritual faculty, to the simple Christian charities and tenderness of daily self-sacrifice, to the unassuming sanctities of those common duties which Christ urged us to do because God Himself did them and loved to do them. In making our home happy by filling it with the spirit of gentle love, in musing on the life of our children and seeing God in it, in watching for and rejoicing in the heavenly touches of divine things which meet us in the common converse of life—in the quiet answer, the genial smile, the patience, zeal, industry, cheerfulness, truthfulness, courtesy and purity which God asks of us as we pass on our hourly way—in doing and watching and loving these things, we shall not be wearied.

They make no violent strain on the imagination or the intellect, or the spirit. They do not ask us whether we believe this or that doctrine, or involve us in the storm of life's problems. They are not impossible or inaccessible to any one. Their world lies all around us—in the ordinary relations of man to man, of man to animals, of man to nature, and a mighty God is in them that grows not old. They only need an attentive heart to find them out, and a loving heart to do them, and they will give you rest. They will put you in possession of the promise—‘ Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls.’

And in these things and the faithful doing of them we shall perhaps learn more of God and immortality, and solve the great problems more nearly, than by end-

less speculation. At least, we shall have got the true starting point for speculation, the home to which we can return when we are tired, and where we know that we are right and doing right. Do then as you would do, when wearied by too grand a scenery. Refresh your heart with the simpler things of the Christian life: then you will be able to return to the discovery of the greater questions with renewed eagerness and with the old enjoyment.

Almost in every point this analogy is supported by Christ's thinking and teaching. He dwelt when He pleased in the loftiest region of truths. You do not think He was only once transfigured by passionate spiritual feeling! To His eyes things too deep not to be obscure to us were clear. Words fell from Him the infinite depth of whose thought we have not fathomed yet. And yet, dwelling in this inner light and breathing always the air of the sublimest heights, we find His work and His teaching revolving always around the simple things of life. In them He found His peace: in making a religion of common life fit for the use of the humblest and of the poor in spirit. In healing the sick and comforting the sorrow-stricken; in taking away the burden of sin; in moving through the ordinary life of men—in the boat, in the field, in the craftsman's shop, in the quiet village, He found for men the way to God, the certainties of immortal life, the best repose of heart. In the homelier scenery of earth He found the best illustrations of the infinite truths of Heaven: in the rain which fell and the flowers that adorned themselves, in the flying-birds and the growing seed, in the

ways of the sheep and the foldings of the vine branch. In these things, simple human and natural things, he chose to reveal the infinite God and His relation to us. To understand them and their stories, to understand the relations of man to man, and man to nature and its life, was to understand the relation of the Everlasting Father to His children. The word is very nigh thee, even in thy heart.

But we shall lose, we say, in this humbler life, the beauty and sublimity which in pursuing high things we found in youth, and we cannot do without beauty, nor aspire without sublimity. We feel like the traveller who, accustomed to the majesty of the mountains and their fertility of beauty, cannot help feeling want of interest, even contempt, for the tamer scenery of the earth. That objection illustrates another danger of the life which gives itself wholly to lofty speculation. It comes to be unable to see the loveliness and the majesty of simple Christian feeling, thought, and act. It is a pitiable life, if we have no sense of beauty in quiet scenery: it is still more pitiable if we have no sense of charm and welfare, except in those rare hours when, in passionate pursuit of the highest truths, we are caught up into the third Heaven and hear unspeakable words.

The true, the open heart, the attentive eye and the balanced nature, find beauty in common scenery, and common life, and it is this beauty which charms us longest and rests us most, alike in scenery and life. It was my fortune to pass once in a single journey from a mountain county in Scotland to the scenery of the

lowlands. I came to my place of rest as evening began to fall. All the mountain energy was gone. God had spoken comfortably to the earth. Every valley was exalted, and every mountain and hill brought low ; the crooked was made straight, and the rough places plain. Earth was very glad of the peace in her breast and of the quiet life without. What I give here, she seemed to say, is good for the service of men : not the flash of the cataract, or the peak above the whirling cloud which may kindle a poet's heart, but the old simple blessings that even the poet needs : grass, and the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit ; grass for cattle, and herb for the service of men. That was the land, outspread in evening peace. A great river swept through it in plenteous curves, beside deep meadows filled with cattle ; and farms, and orchards, and church towers. All the colour was low and sober, but what there was was lovely ; faint green around the river, a vapour of delicate blue that wavered and slept over the farmland and the copse, and where the sun set, most silvery radiance underneath the cloud. Only in one place there was passion. On the far horizon the edge of a low moorland went along from east to west, not fierce or rude in outline like the mountains, but in a long waving line full of soft and infinite curves. There, as if the moor had to remember that it belonged to the mountains by birth, there the colour deepened and there the sky was wild. The ridge was dark from end to end ; not dark without colour, but dusk, deep purple, with a shimmer of light in it, and above it, the space of sky, between it and the stooping clouds, was all

vapour of gold, infinitely deep, deep as the depths of Paradise, into which one might plunge and dive and never find an end.

It was amid the quiet beauty of the land, amid the service of the earth ; amid the sober, lowlit, plenteous landscape—the one touch of the secret beauty whose sight awakes unquenchable desire.

It is precisely the same in the Christian life. We look for beauty of act and feeling too much in the splendid sacrifices and victories of more than ordinary life, in the lives of men at whom the world stands at gaze. But when the Saviour came, He did not strive or cry, nor was His voice heard in the streets. Silence marked the progress of the Word of God. There were no extraordinary sacrifices in His life, till the very last, and that came about naturally and was hidden from the great world. Nothing could be quieter, more sober in colour than the whole scenery of His life. And yet what loveliness of word and deed ! How deep the impression of a divine charm that steals into the heart and heals the soul with quiet, hallowed pleasure. What loud-sounding words have ever equalled the beauty of these : ‘Come unto me all that travail and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest’ ? What act of any high speculator on things divine has touched the sublimity of that act and word when Jesus took a child and set him among the Pharisees ? who has pierced into the infinite more deeply than when He said in all simplicity, ‘My Father worketh hitherto, and I work’ ?

The stormy life of Elijah, the agonised life of St.

Paul, struggling continually with the higher questions of feeling, passed in an Alpine realm of thought. Both have their lofty beauty, but they do not win us to their side, or breathe peace into the heart, as the ineffable beauty of the simple daily love of Christ. Nor, strange to say, are they so sublime. As we understand Christ better, we see that His quietude was grander than the passionate struggle of the others, that His still obedience places Him, as nothing else does, in union with the sublimity of God; that His simplicity is the result of infinite wisdom at home and conversant with the deep roots of things. Lowland life, but always on its horizon, infinite Paradise.

It is a great lesson for us. We shall find the most enduring beauty and sublimity not in the mountainous region of Christian speculation, haunted by the thunderstorms of spiritual doubt and pain, but in sailing on the slowly flowing river of a life of daily love, among the low-lying meadows of that humility that thinks all others worthier than itself, beside his life who does his daily work without a pause, without wondering how well or how ill he does it, like the cottage farm among the orchards. And with that life, there will be revelation also—quiet days, when the still beauty of God will descend like the low colour of the sunset, and fill the heart with mystic peace and long-lived joy: and when out of the far and steady aspiration wrought by doing always the right and loving thing, magnificence will come, and we shall look below the clouds of life straight into the infinite, and in the light know the

truths which speculation only toils all its life in vain to find.

That is then the remedy, and a remedy which does not, as I have tried to prove, destroy or lessen our sense of that which is beautiful or sublime in the spiritual life, but rather adds to it—the remedy for the exhaustion of the spiritual faculty which is so common an occurrence in our modern life. We ought not to give up the longing to pierce the unknown, nor altogether surrender the life among the mountains, for that also is in our nature, and we must not quench our natural powers. The simpler life when it is always uninspired by infinite thoughts that awaken passion and aspiration, might come to weary us as much as the greater glory. It is well when we have been a long time in our nest on the dewy ground of gentle human love, to soar, singing and aspiring, into the skies, and live for a little in a ‘privacy of glorious light;’ but the greater part of life should bring God down to the common earth. Yes, we should turn, when we are wearied with the vast scenery of the great questions of God and man, to contemplate and to fulfil the calmer beauty of a life of quiet faith and homely duty. The colours will not be so dazzling, but the enjoyment of them will last. The scenery of a lowly walk, as through a country lane, with God, will not startle or ravish us with pleasure, but the sweetness of it will sink deep: the birds will sing in the branches as we pass, and the flowers will give us no trouble, and there will neither be danger nor torment, save what He sends to prove us year by year. We shall have hope, not ecstatic, but growing into assurance.

And in such a life, most tenderly, most purely dawns the peace which passeth understanding.

That will be our mingled life, and we shall be infinitely happy in it. The mountains are ours then, and the plains. There is no jaded feeling, no exhaustion. In ceaseless interchange of peaceful and sublime delight our life will be complete. And we shall hear two things from Christ; each said to us, one to each part of our two-fold nature and two-fold life: 'Suffer this little child to come unto me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven'—that is one. 'Blessed art thou. Flesh and blood hath not revealed to thee this truth, but my Father which art in Heaven'—that is the other.

[June 13, 1879.]

*UNSELFISH IMMORTALITY.*

‘By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.’—HEBREWS xi. 4.

BEFORE the Christian doctrine of Immortality was sent to revolutionise thought and act, the motive of a noble life was to live, not only for the present, but for the future good of man. Men felt that their words and deeds would live in those that came after them, and fill their friends, their country, and the world. They wrought to be remembered, and to make their remembrance useful and creative. But when Christ revealed his doctrine of immortal life, and men believed it, that revelation (putting aside the vast good that followed on its acceptance) acted—since it is the weakness of men to run into extremes—on the previous motive and all but destroyed it. It dwarfed the present life, it tended to fix men’s thoughts more on their own personal fate hereafter than on the interests of other men. It made religion forget too much the future of the world, and all we may do for it, in contemplation of the endless future of those who should be saved or lost.

And, more or less, these are evils which at times influence those who believe in the Christian immortality.

There has always been a reaction against the doctrine, and especially now, on the very ground of these extremes. It is said that it takes men away from practical life in the present, and fixes their best thoughts on a vague hope; that in itself it is selfish, and rests on selfish desires; that it makes us forget that we should live for mankind—live so as to abide for good in future lives. The objections are often true. Only those who make them run into their own extreme, and deny immortality, and fancy all these evils belong to faith in it. They do not belong to it. Believed justly, the truth of immortality increases the practical powers of life; its hope is not selfish; and it doubles our impulse to live for others. But on these I do not dwell; I want to go back for a little to the old idea, and bring its power into the Christian hope.

It seems to me that we Christians not only need, in this day, to teach and believe in an unselfish immortality—that is, one that dwells less on personal and more on universal interests in the life to come; but also to dwell far more than we have done on the old Pagan thought of our living so as to live in the lives of those that follow us, for the increase of their good and knowledge and love. When we have wrought this thought into our minds, realised its motives, done its duties and lived its life, we shall then be in a fit state to believe in our personal immortality without the chance of being made more selfish by it, or less human; and we shall be able to keep the doctrine itself freed from the evils

which have caused it to be challenged. Christ intended his doctrine to fill up what was wanting in the high Pagan thought, not to destroy that thought. We have almost destroyed it by neglect. Therefore, that old conception is my subject to-day, not immortality. I have called it Pagan, but it is as much Christian as Pagan, for it is rooted in human nature; and in the book of the Christian we find it again and again expressed. Here are two instances of it: 'He being dead yet speaketh;' and 'Their works do follow them.'

The last time I heard those words spoken was in a ~~—~~ / northern churchyard. I was standing under the yew that shadows Wordsworth's grave. A soft wind, like a voice, went through the tree, and it seemed the birds that lived near the grave were all tame. A robin and a thrush stood within reach of my hand on the low stone wall; and I thought they must have known their friend slept there, and that none would dare to harm them where he lay. Wild flowers raised their heads and stretched their arms over the edge of the stone that held his name, and the lichen laid its fantastic fretwork on it; each gave their tiny tribute to one who loved them. I could hear the ripple of the clear water of the Rotha, as it ran round the base of the churchyard wall, always singing its hymn of quiet joy, and always, I thought, with remembrance in its music of its companion who had sung of it and loved it so dearly. There was nothing which did not seem to think of him, and the very stillness of the summer afternoon, that only the song of the birds and the sound of the water entered, sounds that made the stillness thoughtful, was

like the spirit of his quiet verse. Then in the silence my brother turned to me for a moment and said, 'His works do follow him.'

It was the secret of our walk that afternoon. There was not a shade on Grasmere Lake as we rowed across it, nor a silent glade in the woods of Rydal, nor a way-side nook among the ferns, nor a slumbering cloud in the sky, nor yet the solitary hollow high on the hills that we reached at last, which did not bring back something Wordsworth had said, which we did not understand the better for his words. Being dead, he yet spoke.

And when we watched at last from the hill top the sun die—and it seemed as if the poet died with it—our thought took greater substance, for it was only when the sun died that the sunset grew divine. Its lingering light peopled the sky with dreams and thoughts of the great Spirit that moves in the world, and troubles the waters of men's imagination. See, I said—sun and poet go together; being dead, they yet speak. Then turning homeward, as we faced the east, right over Helmcrag, like a queen, stepped the stately moon, dreaming as she came into the halls of heaven, and it seemed as if she also came to pour her light, like love, on the places where he had watched her and the grave where he slept. His works do follow him, we thought again. He sets in the sun and rises in the moon. Day and night are his, and human hearts.

It is so that every great man speaks to men. Dead, they live; buried, they rise again. And they speak with more power after death than during life, for

jealousy and envy no longer dog their footsteps, and their faults are seen as God sees them, through the veil of charity which justice weaves ; and their good is disentangled from their evil and set in clear light, because so wise and true is the heart of mankind, in spite of all its wrong and folly, that in its memory it is the good and not the evil that survives.

Thus purified by the after-thought of men, the voices of the great thinkers come to us ; they enter our home, speak to us when we wake, and in dreams when we sleep. In the silence of our study we hear them, even in our daily business. They reprove, awaken, exalt, and kindle our soul. In temptation they strengthen us, in sorrow they comfort, in joy they enhance the joy. They give expression to the heart that cannot speak ; they put into form the thoughts we cannot clothe ; they idealise our home life by showing us its beauty ; they throw, as we read, new light on our business, they suggest new methods for our work. They follow us in our journeys. The ways and buildings of every city are filled with them ; the stones of Jerusalem, Florence, and Athens speak with the very tones of David, Dante, and Pericles ; we hear as we walk the streets the voices of the thinkers, and the lawgivers, and the warriors, and the poets, who made the people and built the city. They add their life to Nature's life. Through the fields and hills the poets keep us company. The air we breathe is full of their fine thoughts, and the music of their verse flows with it. The sea waves repeat their songs ; the mountain echoes bring them to our ears ; no place is too lonely,

no silence too deep, for these beloved companions. 'There is neither speech nor language, but their voices are heard among them ; their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words to the end of the world.' Nor does their power cease there. Nations are moved by them. Their words, spoken by great men at a great crisis, kindle a whole people, and make them repent of sin, or alter a policy, or rush into a noble effort. There are instances where one sentence has led a revolution, or changed a world. Oh, mighty is the strength of the dead. 'Deep in the general heart of man their power survives.' This is the human enduringness of those who nobly think and do, and it passes through all the future and fills it. While men think and love, these things cannot die.

Again, as we look back into time, the sense of the immortality of thought is doubled. For we can bind great men up, not only with the future, but with the past. How did they win half their power? By being themselves touched and moved by those who had been before them, by listening to the voices of the dead ! They have given to us, but they themselves received, and the works and words of centuries of men went to kindle and increase their power. Every man who is of the great temper of genius is as the focus of a lens, receiving and concentrating in himself all the rays of thought and feeling which stream from the distant past of mankind, and sending forth from himself the same rays with his own light added to them to radiate over an infinite future. He is at one with all the great spirits of the past, and at one with all the listening

spirits of the future. Therefore, we conceive through him more fully the eternity of thought and feeling in mankind. We know that there is a family that never dies. Each member of it belongs to all the past; each member of it fills the future with his works that follow him, with the words that, dead, he yet speaks to men.

And as we go on thinking of the subject, it closes in a thought which brings us into union with the whole of mankind in a universal way. For this great family is of no separate nationality. It is not Roman, or Grecian, or English, but of all nations and kindreds. The nature which it has, and from which it speaks, is the one human nature in its universal qualities and feelings which Eastern and Western, North and South, possess. This family makes and keeps all men one. The language it speaks is the universal language of human feeling and human thought. As it has no foreign tongue, so it is not ancient or modern, but of all time. Nor can difference of place make its members strangers. They are always at home with us, and with all, wherever there are men and women. We walk with Socrates from Athens to the plane tree near the Ilissus, and it seems as if we were walking with our friend in the park. We listen to Job arraigning and challenging God, and we think we hear our own hearts speak in passionate trial. We find in a cave a bone carved with the reindeer's image, thousands of years ago, in the dawn of man, and we sympathise with the desire to imitate and adorn which speaks from it to us. We listen to the wild, religious legend of an Arctic tribe, or to the poetry of the Arab, and we know we

belong to the spirits that created them. And then, considering all the brotherhood of these voices, in which there are no divisions of time, or place, or language, or nations, there rises before us the majestic image of one great fellowship of human nature, in which a myriad myriad souls are held as one—the image of the unity of mankind.

By the speech of the dead, by the succession of their works in us, this great thought is confirmed, extended, multiplied.

This is the large view of the subject. But it sounds cold to us who have not to do with greatness, and it seems too far apart from our homely and little lives. It is not really so. The work and power of the greater men after they are dead is founded on the fact that their thoughts, feelings, and powers are the same in kind as ours, though greater in degree ; and since that is true, it follows that our influence, when we are dead, will live as theirs has done, only in a smaller circle, and with lesser power. When we think that all we do, say, and think, endures, lives again in our home and our society, and works like leaven when we are dead, even when our very memory has perished—who can say that the thought does not touch us nearly, fill our home life with motives, and our public life with impulse and energy?

Our home and our society are to us what the world is to a great man—the sphere we may fill with work that cannot die. The statesman moulds a people into order and progress, partly by the force of character, partly by great measures. We are the statesmen of

our little world. Every day, mother and father stamp their character upon their children's lives, mould their manners, conscience, and their future by the measures by which they direct the household.

The great poet puts the feelings of mankind into form and earns their gratitude. We should all be poets one of another. Every day we can help a friend, a child, a brother, to realise their own thoughts, to understand their feelings. Every day we can, by ourselves loving beauty, and expressing our love of it, awaken the love of beauty in others. Every day, by sympathy with all that we find of self-surrender, of love, of truth, of kindness, and naturalness in our home and our society, we can do the work of the poets who record what is beautiful in human nature, and make men love it, and do it.

The great philosophers give truth to men, but that which more than all inspires us from them is the eagerness of their search for truth, and the rigid truthfulness with which they made their search. Can you not follow and transmit that, at least? Yes, you can live so as to drive into the soul of all who know you the sense that there is nothing so dear to you as truth, nothing which compares with its pursuit, and so hand on the torch, alit and glowing, to all who know you. You can in all things make accuracy of knowledge, of expression, of method first in matters pertaining to knowledge, not by wearisome insistence, but by quiet example; and this is to do the same work as that of the great thinkers in science on your tiny world.

The evangeliser of a nation does spiritual work of

which all the world shares the good. But there is humbler work which we may do by simply loving God, and man for God's sake. Your children's children may bless your life with God. The sermon of your devotion, your faith in God, the brightness of your hope, the daily lesson of your patient love, will be heard for many years still by many who never saw your face. They will understand from the tradition of your life how beautiful it is to find God, how dear to men are holiness, truth, and self-surrender. Your life will guard the faith of the household, long after you are dead, in hours of doubt and struggle. Heaven is no dream to the children and children's children of those whose lives have been heavenly ; and God's justice, love, and faithfulness are not doubted by those who have seen them lived, in the records of whose family there have been saints.

This is our work ; and all of it, work like the statesman's, the poet's, the philosopher's, and the saint's, lasts after you, lives with tenfold power when you are dead, multiplies in the lives of those who have known you well. Oh, what manner of men should we be in life when we think of all that we shall do when we are dead ! How noble should be our action, how faithful our thought, how restrained and true our speech ! When we think of how many characters we shall form a part, how strongly should we build our own ! When we think of our immortality in men, how eagerly should we labour to be worthy of that immortality ! Being dead, you will speak ; what sort will be your speech ? Your works will follow you ; ask yourselves what kind

of works will follow you. To die and know that men, when they think of you, will be gayer, truer, more loving, more pitiful, more God's children—that would make death's face look kind. To die and know that when men think of you, no inspiration will arise, but only the memory of gloom, or hatred, falsehood, or pitilessness—that makes death terrible. Be otherwise; let your works follow you with inspiring power, speak from the grave to comfort, kindle, and redeem.

And now I build up out of all I have said about great men and ourselves, three duties and their grounds by which we may better live in behalf of the future of mankind.

The first is to take noble care of the works that are handed down to you and the voices that come to you from the silent world. We look too carelessly on that store and its riches. It is so large, and they are so various, that we treat them like things too common, and great books and great deeds become like wayside flowers, which men glance at and pass by. But we get no good of a thing till we study it, and honour it, and love it. The wealth of the past thought reveals itself, like the beauty of the daisy, to him who kneels down to see it. The spirit that learns nothing from the past is the spirit of the critic, vain and blind, envious and carping, searching for faults, not for beauty, irreverent in praise or blame. The spirit that gains and makes its own the wisdom and loveliness of times gone by is the spirit of the lover. He who has loved knows what that spirit is. To him who has not loved it is of no use to speak of it. He will not know till he has it. In

that spirit study great books, for their thought makes thought in you ; honour great deeds, for in the love of them is inspiration and kindling and high endeavours ; follow great lives, for in their pursuit good will grow and evil die in you. The past spreads a banquet before you : eat and be thankful. The eating will nourish your whole being ; the thankfulness will help you to digest the food. And as you do this, the sense of the enduring life of human kind will grow on you ; you will begin, through long inweaving of yourself with the past, to feel inwoven with an infinite future. And as everything you have been doing—the honour, the study, the love, the admiration, have (in their doing and feeling) exalted your nature, so this last result will exalt you still more, and make you worthy to speak when you are dead, to follow your works in men to come.

Secondly. After we have long made this study, we cannot help observing that the enduring element in all the works and thoughts of bygone men is that which they have done and said with truth and simplicity, that is, in harmony with the universal nature of men and things. It is not eloquence alone, or subtlety of thought, or flashing fancy, or the philosophy which penetrates nature, but the telling of simple truth about men and their lives, their hearts and their hopes—told with justice and directness, with love, and pity, and tenderness, and with the insight and power that these give—that endure while the world lasts, and live and move in men. There is nothing men like so well as to hear about themselves, but the things they hear must

be true and simple. If you wish your thoughts and work to live when you are dead—repress the merely fantastic in you; leave subtleties of thought and action aside; love what is simple and loving, true and direct; act and speak and write naturally, in obedience to truth of feeling and justice of thought: wait till you have got your thoughts clear before you speak, and your act seen on all sides in thought before you realise it; and let speech and act be the absolutely true result of your own nature, so that all the world may understand it. Above all, love the common every-day feelings and life of men and women and children. Delight in the simple love, and endeavour, and endurance, and faith, and beauty that each day shows you in the lives of men, and find in these things not only what you may love, but what you may worship as the image of God,—and then I prophesy that death will not quench in night the work that you will do, nor the silence of the grave bury your voice. Your work and speech have been human; you will endure in human hearts and be loved by them.

Lastly, when we consider the universal communion of those who have done and thought nobly or beautifully, and how among this communion there is neither nation, nor time, nor place, nor language, but mankind is all and in all—we become ourselves universal in thought and feeling. The barriers which hem in our view dissolve, and we cease to look at ourselves alone. It is not only our own nation, or its interests, our own time that engage our thoughts. We gaze now on the vast landscape of humanity with inspiring delight and

interest. From every point of it impulse, and knowledge, and pleasures flow. We take them into ourselves, and more and more each day. Greece, Rome, and India, barbarian and Scythian, the ancient and the modern world, speak to us, and our whole being expands, dilates, and grows. We are citizens, not of England only, but of the polity of mankind; we are brothers, not of our narrow society, but of the vast society which began with the first ray of love and intelligence on earth, which will endure as long as love and intelligence endure. It is so mighty a thought that it will make us great in heart, if not in words and deeds. And at least in our feelings there will be an infinite element, and that element flowing through our life will give it an unconscious power—breadth to the intellect, wisdom to daily life and its common acts, depth and character to our feelings, till, though we have no genius and no talent, we yet shall be a power in our little world, and our lives live after us in the regardant memory and long affection of those that shared our life.

That is how we may live, and what we may do towards being alive for evermore in men. And then, when you have felt and done this, do you think you will be satisfied? I think not. Thought in its passion for continuing itself, feeling in its ardent way of rushing forward, will conceive and feel a higher immortality than that which only lives in dying men. We shall think of all thought as living for ever; we shall feel of all feeling as loving as ever. We shall cease to believe that goodness and love and truth and beauty and genius die with the dissolution of the body. We

shall arise into the conception of an everlasting life for this vast and glorious race which has so wonderfully thought and done and loved, and turn, believing, with outstretched arms and eager eyes, to Him who said, 'God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to Him.'

[November 1877.]

*SUNSHINE.<sup>1</sup>*

‘Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun.’—ECCLESIASTES xi. 7.

IN our dark and chilly climate, it is pleasant to think of the warm and sunny land in which these words were written, and pleasanter to think that the writer had the heart to love the glow, and to rejoice in the brightness, of the sun. We cannot here know what it is to have its splendid presence with us hour by hour, to feel it pervading life with its daily joy, to be certain of the beauty and colour and the sense of home which are the children of its light. But in a different way we sometimes realise it. I remember, some years ago, crossing the moor between Wensleydale and Swaledale. We had walked the whole way up in one of those wet mists which embrace the earth, and are like lead on the heart, and we walked in sombre silence. We could scarcely see the ground at our feet; there was no colour in earth or air; we were cold and homeless. But as we crested the hill and came out on the broad summit, a

<sup>1</sup> The idea of this sermon was taken from an interesting book, which collected the remains of Mr. Samuel Greg, and was published under the title of *A Layman's Legacy*.

wind came from the north-west, soft and strong ; the mist fled before it, to our glorious joy ; in a moment we were bathed in light and heat, and in the blue and cloudless heaven shone the noonday sun.

No tongue can tell the change. It was transfiguration : it seemed as if a whole world were called into creation ; valleys below, and winding river, and woodland on the slopes, and broad-shouldered hills beyond, ridge beyond ridge : and, near at hand, the heather land and the grassy spaces where the flowers lived, and among them delighted animals. And over all flew, and changed and glowed, like a thousand-fold being, the spirit of colour, so that each thing seemed to live a double life, its own, and the colour-spirit's life. And when the first joy was over, came the stealing, consoling glow, the sense of home and comfort, the welfare of life ; and we sat down to rest and enjoy. Comfort and clearness and colour—these were ours. And these and the sight I have pictured illustrate what I am going to say to-day.

It is just so we feel when we step out of the daily trouble and pushing of the world, out of the rush of selfish people, into a sunny household among sunshiny people. The mist clears away, the sky of life opens, we feel warm and happy, and joy knocks at our heart and asks to come in. The heads of the household spread love around them, the children like their lives, and when children like their lives, they make every one in the household feel their happiness. The servants are at home, and friends not foes of the family : they are part of it, part of its circle. There is a natural grace

and ease : a sense of refuge from disquiet in the house. It is so pleasant to be there, so gladsome, that we ask ourselves why it is? why there is so much difference between it and other places?

Well, one reason is that the sunlight of good temper shines in it. Good temper is the result of a well-ordered character, in which each quality is so tempered as to act well with the rest, and to minister to the rightful and easy activity of the whole. It may be born with a man in whom the elements are kindly mixed ; but for the most part it has to be won. And we can only win it by daily sacrifice of the impulsive, impertinent, and selfish demands of our different qualities, appetites, passions, to be first. Sometimes one, sometimes another, attempts to master and rule the others. Our business, watching over our own character, is to keep the invader in his place, on the ground, that, if he get the upper hand, he will not only spoil our nature by his despotism, but will, because he spoils it, make us a trouble and an injury to our home, our society, and mankind. If we work at this quietly and daily, we shall get our character into harmony, and the result of that is—good temper ; sunlight in heart and home.

The opposite of it is, not only a bad temper, that is, when any one selfish passion tyrannises over the whole man, darkens the whole household, and propagates itself. Of that I do not speak, for it is plainly evil. It is a kind of madness, and often ends in morose or furious mania. It is hell itself to have such a heart, and it makes the household a hell. But the

opposite to a good temper is also the fretful and complaining temper—for which persons find many excuses, of which excuses ill-health, or fancied ill-health, is the worst. For ill-health is God's call on the man to win good temper, and he is bound to do it. If you wish then to win sunshine at home, stop the habit of complaint.

There are those who can never pass by a fault with one strong word of blame, but go on reiterating blame, worrying the fault and those who have made it as a cat worries a mouse, remembering it again and again long after it has occurred. There are those who are always making little faults great, who make mistakes into sins, who never cover anything with charity, whose temper pours acid on small sores, and irritates them into enduring wounds. There are others who fret alone, whom no one can cheer, who brood over their wrongs, or over things that go wrong, till their face always lives in shadow, and who claim with infinite impertinence that they are unselfish because they do not complain in words; as if their selfishness was not more hopeless than that of the open complainer. The latter, at least, gets rid of his temper in words; the other nurses it.

There are others who are always forecasting evil, who allow small cares and troubles to overwhelm them with fear and hopelessness, and who drag life after them like an over-weighted cart; as if the evil of the day were not sufficient to meet and overcome; as if there were no Heavenly Father who cared for them, and who will help them to have courage and presence of mind and

hope and trust, and to gain all the qualities which conquer life, if they will only live a little as Christ lived.

While these things last there is no sunshine in a house. You must conquer them, or live in darkness.

2. And there is yet another thing which goes with good temper. It is, that freedom is given to each member of the house to grow and express their growth in acts and words ; freedom within the limits necessary for the pleasure and good of the rest. There is no harsh checking of pleasant gaiety, no rough cries when a frank opinion, or a quick thought is given utterance. Each child, each person, feels that they may speak openly, and that what they say will not only be listened to and answered, but that if it is good and intelligent, it will be enjoyed ; till everyone feels that they are of some value, that their growth is watched, like a flower's, with pleasure, that they minister to the general glad-someness and sunshine of the house.

Now the root of all this—the power of being able to keep a household from fretting and complaining and from violent tempers ; the power of being able to encourage, nourish, and stimulate the freedom and growth of others—is gained from there having been built up in the minds of all in the house, as the first motive of life, the great Christian law—Christian because entirely human—‘Think of others more than of yourself, and of others’ happiness more than of your own unhappiness.’ And of this law, the best definition to remember, is a word of St. Paul’s: ‘In honour preferring one another.’ For we are bound not only to prefer one another, to put, in all matters of enjoyment

or interest or work, our sister, brother, husband or wife, before ourselves; not only to be ready to give away anything which may be pleasant for them—but also to prefer them ‘in honour.’ That is, to try and find out what each in the household does best, and therefore enjoys most; to find out in doing what things they will most shine and most delight others, and to help them towards these things; to arrange circumstances, and make plans, that others than we may be the first in the things they do well; to rejoice in another’s shining; to suppress ourselves in order that we may be able to make others appear in honour, and be better liked, reverenced, and loved by ourselves and all. This is true courtesy. It is its very flower; it is the essence of Christ’s teaching set to music in daily life. It will bring out all the good in others; it will bring out what is best in yourself; it will make your home like very heaven. And over it, warm, comforting, sweet sunlight will shine and brood and quicken and enchant; the sunshine of true, tender, gladsome, ready, helpful, sweet and simple human love, touched into purer light and tenderer warmth by the smile of the love of God.

3. One thing more. If you would have sunlight in your home, see that you have work in it; that you work yourself, and set others to work. Nothing makes moroseness and heavy-heartedness in a house so fast as idleness. The very children gloom and sulk if they are left with nothing to do. If all have their work, they have not only their own joy in creating thought, in making thought into form, in driving on something to completion, but they have the joy of ministering to

the movement of the whole house, when they feel that what they do is part of a living whole. That in itself is sunshine. See how the face lights up, how the step is quickened, how the whole man or child is a different being from the weary, aimless, lifeless, complaining being who had no work! It is all the difference between life and death.

The morning is bright with the knowledge of how much has to be done. The midday walk is looked forward to, the hour of rest or play is a true joy; the evening hour, when all that has been done is talked over, is delightful; and sleep, 'sore labour's bath,' is only another piece of pleasant work. All eyes in that household look forward, all its members are bright, all honour one another. Every day there is the light of something conquered in the eyes of those who work. Time, the grey shadow, takes substance, walks as a friend with those who work; and he is a charming companion when we make him out of a ghost into a reality. In such a house, if there be also the good temper of love, sunshine never ceases. For in it the great law of humanity is obeyed, a law which is also God's law. For what said Christ: 'My Father worketh hitherto and I work.' Sunlight comes with work.

And the same results that follow sunshine in Nature, follow its moral image in a home. In such a home as I have described, there is light; we see things as they are, and in their right relations. The right things to do for the advantage of the household and for its future appear, sometimes at once, always after discussion. When difficulties come, the way out of them is

seen in the bright light. Troubles do not grow larger than they are ; times of prosperity do not lure people into follies ; all events are seen justly. The characters of the children come out clearly, and what is best for them to do, and how it is best to train them. Everyone must know what I mean. Examples lie before us everywhere, only we do not always see that half our confusion and trouble and doubt as to the affairs of our family and household come simply out of this—that our own tempers, and the dark tempers we allow, have taken all light out of the house, so that we cannot see what life means, needs, and awaits.

In such a house, too, there is colour. Variety of colour in a sunny landscape has its analogy in the variety of character which appears in a sunny household. The smallest flower shines, and enjoys, and expands in sunlight ; the smallest child gives forth its special colour, and scent, and charm, and good in a home which is warm and bright with love. Both the light and the colour minister to the general pleasure, and partly create and partly enhance the genial warmth which broods in such a household. Each member of it feels what the traveller feels who rests by a brookside in a sunny field : a sense of well-being, of happy content, of glow, and peace. Everyone is nested in life ; all are cosy, to use a homely word ; and there is no blessing greater than this in our troubled life. And it comes of love, and courtesy, and goodness, and sacrifice, of watchful kindness, and patience, and obedient trust, of sweet temper, and of the sense of God's kindness, of His Fatherhood and friendship with us.

This is the picture, and these the causes of a sunny home. Truly its light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold its sun. And to close all, since everyone there likes to live and enjoy, since everyone loves and is happy—there is a pretty gaiety, a tender play of laughter and humour, a pleasant interchange of light, and colour, and warmth, in words and mirth, which make the brightness perfect, and is as much the work of the sunlight in the house, as the delightful gaiety of nature is the doing of the sun.

It is a fair human landscape on which we look. Nor is it apart from Him who is the Father of all sunshine. The light that lights it is the same light that enlightens the life of God—the light and warmth of love; the colour that adorns it is the same colour that, flowing from the changeful activity of the infinite modes of God's love, makes His life for ever beautiful; the joy that fills it is the same sunny rapture which attends His ceaseless and contented creation, which follows on His eternal working, which, rising in immeasurable thought, passes with boundless pleasure into immeasurable form and act, and makes in its endless evolution the worlds of matter, thought, and spirit, of nature, men, and angels. We may not see Him face to face, but His life is unbroken sunlight, and where He is, is sunlight. His sunlight is love and work, and if we would abide with Him, we must love and we must work.

And now, still dwelling on the same subject, and in order to illustrate it further, I pass for a short time from the outward home to the inward heart, from the life

of the household to the life a man hides in his own soul.

There are times in life that much resemble the picture I made at the beginning. Times when, having long walked in mist and darkness, blind and dumb in a colourless world, with the rain of misery streaming on our heart, and the hail of our own thoughts lashing us, as the wicked weather beat on the old king in the play ; when the tempest in our mind

Did from the sense take all feeling else  
But what beat there—

at last, at last, to our unspeakable joy, the mist uprolls and flies before the wind ; the rain ceases, our thoughts no longer drive on us so pitilessly, and the sun breaks forth. In a week, in a day, sometimes in an hour, God alone knows how, we are suddenly flooded with light again. Life begins once more to be at peace. Joy returns, we look around and all things smile in the eyes of hope. ‘Truly that light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is to behold the sun.’ It is the state God wishes us to be in. It is not always in our power, for we must suffer sometimes for the sake of others. But a great deal of it is always in our power if we choose to follow God’s laws. We know very well, when we have got out of the sunshine, that nine times out of ten it has been our own doing, and we know it even better when we get back into the sunlight out of the darkness we have ourselves woven round our way. ‘The shadows God sends are few ; those we make for ourselves are many.’

We darken our personal sunlight by ill-health. I do not speak of the ill-health we cannot avoid, those swift attacks which break on us from without, in a fever, or an hereditary disease, though even those we may lessen the chances of by wisdom—but of that general lowness of tone, that daily ill-at-ease, that nervous irritability, and exhaustion, which are so frequent in a society which lives unnaturally, and stimulates and depresses itself unnaturally. For our own sake, and for the sake of others whom we trouble and irritate, we are bound to obey the laws of nature, bound to find out why we are ill, and if we are really ill, bound to cure ourselves if we can; bound to live carefully, temperately, and steadily. And for the most part we can keep well; and most of this general ill-health is cured by very simple means: by fresh air, enough exercise, and strict temperance in food and drink. This is not morality, you say, but medicine. It is morality. It is as much a medicine for the mind as for the body. It means watchful self-conquest; conquest of sloth, conquest of appetite, conquest of indulgence; and that, done daily. It is more, it is spiritual. For its motive should be that you may keep yourself in the sunlight in which good work is done for God and man, in which you are able to use all your powers well, in which you will yourself, rejoicing in good health, give and spread joy, gaiety and good-temper around you.

That is fair. But fairer in God's sight, and in ours, is one who has not this sunlight of life, but who yet in the midst of illness makes sunshine about him, by love and sacrifice, by patient cheer and self-forget-

fulness. Such a life is sunlight in a shady place, its glow and colour in a gloomy world. It makes us believe in another world where all is light. And, indeed, it is the light of that world shining on the earth. It is the very sunshine of God in human life on which then we look, from which we take comfort and joy.

Still more is sunlight in us the result of work. I do not mean of work in the world. That is needful, but of that I have spoken, and the work I now think of is done within. It is the storing up of noble thoughts, of beautiful images, of ideals for mankind—liberty, faith, destruction of evil—of high faiths in the present, of inspiring hopes for the future; of simple, honourable, pure and tender memories from the past. It is to furnish the house of the heart with these things, so that into whatever chamber we go we may be delighted. It is to add to these things, which are the work of the heart, others which are the work of the intellect. No man can be sunny whose silent hours and leisure times have not employment prepared for them which will occupy them wholesomely. We know not when we may be separated from outward work—thrown upon ourselves; and it is the worst of follies if we have not laid up intellectual material on which the brain can labour. Every man ought to have, beyond his daily business, some study of thought or imagination on which he can fall back when he is alone or smitten with illness; for the feelings of the heart do not then supply sufficient food for life, and to dwell on them alone brings on a slow and in the end a corrupting sadness.

Provide for sunlight in yourself by providing the means of inward work.

But the crown of all, that which sets the sun in our inner life, though illness may come, though the very mind itself may grow weak, though all the scenery of life may be darkened with misfortune, is to have the sunlight of God's presence in our souls ; the sunlight of goodness, of a pure heart, of the true and loving spirit of Christ Jesus. It is to live in light to live in Him. His life in us is our light. It is a life which conquers sin, and in the conquering we know and rejoice in forgiveness. That weight of sin ! how it darkens life, ruins work, corrupts the temper, enslaves the whole man and his powers, and turns the beauty of the world into a reproach and the sun itself into darkness. It is a very ravishment of joy to overcome it, and to be set free to work again ; to use our powers, to love the beauty of the woods and hills once more, to feel that God has said to us, 'I punish, but I forgive ; you shall have sunny weather in your soul.'

It is a life which is filled consciously by the presence of God ; which is certain of His friendship, which runs to Him in trouble for His smile, which feels His peace in storm ; which in the deepest outward darkness has His quiet light within ; which says always, with strong affection, perfect faith, 'I am His child. Whatever happens, He does all things well, first for mankind, and then for me.' That consciousness will make sunlight in you always, fairer than the morning, lovelier than the evening ;—these die, but this remains, the possession and the strength of the soul.

In the inner life then, so protected by good health, so lighted by pure feeling and noble thinking, so filled with forgiving love and the sunny presence of God, we shall see clearly all things that make for our education ; see the right things to do, the right paths to take, and be master of our way. Our sunlight makes life clear. And we shall have colour enough. Who does not feel that in such a character there will be endless variety ; such rejoicing pleasure in things as will make old things always new ; continual change and growth in the elements that make up the landscape of the soul. And with it all, is the warm sense of being at home with God, of glowing all through with the light and heat of His nature ; so that breathing that divine atmosphere here on earth, we guess and more than guess what it will be to live with Him at last in the heavenly sunlight. We sit as the traveller sat on the hill-top, and rejoice : and yet we have more than he, for beyond the rest and joy of earth we look for a deeper rest and a deeper joy, when we shall be nearer to the outpouring of God's warm and radiant sunlight.

What will that sunlight be ? It will be to have lost all thought of self in rejoicing in the highest beauty, truth, and love. It will be to live in such a world and with such a heart, that all things will bring tidings and revelation of God to us, and, inspired by this glorious knowledge, to worship Him with self-forgetful joy and love. All things, reflecting God, will be so beautiful, that we shall have no time to brood upon ourselves. We shall not think of our sins or sorrows or temptations, for we shall have a righteousness to

contemplate in which sins shall be lost ; a rapturous life of God to enter into in which sorrows shall die ; an infinite working and movement of creation to see in which temptation is impossible.

Out of this contemplation, infinite love shall rise and glow within us, and in its fulness there will be no room for the petty vanities, the passionate desires for precedence, the morbid self-questioning, which darken our hearts on earth. Losing self, we shall find all things—all life, knowledge, and love. Our soul shall dilate in the knowledge of all things. We shall see the universal light in which all things and spirits think, the universal love in which all the world, and all that feels, is kindled, inspired, and urged to creation.

God of Heaven, what joy that shall be ! what freedom, progress—a new creation every day ; clear vision, infinite colour, all the glow of home in the midst of a universal life ! Oh, when it comes, when we are lifted into it at last, and become living beings in the being of His light, it may be we may remember this day on earth and say to ourselves, ‘ Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun.’

[November 1877.]

*SHADOW.*

‘ Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning ; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord.’—Luke xii. 35, 36.

IT may well be that Christ thought as He spoke these words of the night of the Passover. That was a grievous night and one much to be remembered. What every household did, the whole nation did. They waited awake, from sunset till midnight, in readiness for action, girt up for the journey. In the dead darkness, in the heavy air that gloomed in their rooms, their lights were burning as they watched. Fear, expectation, and hope ran in and out of their hearts ; but mostly hope prevailed, for they waited for their Lord who should set them free. Not one thought, in that hour, went backward to the past oppression ; all souls, while they waited, rushed forth in faith to realise the coming day, and saw the sunlight of deliverance rise glorious through the shadows of slavery. Outside the littén rooms deep midnight lay, and the storm gathered, and on the wings of the darkness and the thunder brooded the angel of the plague. It was their time of shadow, and the text and the picture together lay before us the temper of mind fitted for

household and heart, when shadow comes on life. As the sunshine of life was my subject last Sunday, the shadow of life is my subject to-day.

When shadow comes by our own fault or by that of others, we are like the Israelites. We can do nothing outwardly: we are forced to stand still. But we can keep up a temper of mind and thought, and we can work inwardly on ourselves, or within the bounds of our household.

i. How should we work on ourselves? Shadow comes on our inner life: a great sorrow, or a great sin, or a great storm of thought in which hope, faith, and God seem to die, pour thick darkness on the soul. Stricken down, groping in the gloom, men and women think there is nothing for it but to lie silent and helpless in the night. And some make this into a good thing, and think that this is courage, and when asked why they do not arouse themselves, answer that there is nothing to do, and that they cannot see. It is not the part of a man, it is not the strength of a woman, it is not the duty or the nobility of a son and daughter of God. Our duty is to arise and light our lamps. As long as we lived in sunshine we did not need them; but now in the midnight of the heart, it is strange if we have no lamps laid by against the evil day; and, in truth, we all possess them. Rise, take them out of their recess, kindle them, and live by their light till sunlight comes.

Light the lamp of Memory. Remember all your sunshine; bring its beauty into your sad life. It is not always true that a sorrow's crown of sorrow is

remembering happier things. It is so at first. But if we dwell with resolution on past happiness, it slowly shakes itself loose from the pain of its loss, and comes, untouched, to lay its hand on our heart and comfort it. Then that memory of happiness wakens gratitude. We think how good God has been to us in the past, how much He gave us—the innocent days of childhood when we had no care; the bright years of youth when we dreamt and loved so much, when endless aspiration brought with it endless pleasure; our later life when we realised in form so much we had conceived. These were His sunny gifts, and we begin to thank God. And how much more we have to remember; how much of the sunlight of human love and trust! How well we have been loved; how deeply we have been trusted in! We think how many have been kind to us and loved our kindness; we recall the old days when fatherhood and motherhood guarded us and gave us a love which is now all steeped in tender thought; we remember the sweet half-forgotten friendships which led life on day by day, through flowers; we think of the many days when in woods and on hills and by the sea, the loveliness of nature deepened our joy in human companionship and human love—and out of all grows forth at last, in the light of our lamp, a hundred tender and beautiful pictures on the walls of our heart to soften and soothe our pain and fill our darkness with tender light.

And then deep gratitude will come, gratitude to God, gratitude to man. No companion can be better for us in the darkness. Gratitude will heal the worst evil of darkness, the angry bitterness which, continued and

cherished, corrupts and hardens the heart ; and no need is deeper, no blessing is greater in great pain and sorrow of soul, than a cure for that. Nor is that all gratitude does for us. It not only takes away evil, it gives good. The softening it brings to us does not weaken us as too much pity is sure to do. It makes the soul stronger by giving to it, through recollection of good, power to endure evil. Like courage, gratitude fortifies the soul ; nay, it is itself one of the roots of courage. If we are grateful, we shall be brave. Light then the lamp of memory. The first of our duties in shadow is to remember sunlight.

Then there is the lamp of Meditation.

In the rush of the world we have but little time for quiet thought. In sunshine every hour brings its engaging joy, its active work. We have no time to study our life and our character ; and for want of that study we often get into grave wrong. Serious in our business, we are not serious with ourselves. We let the inward life drift as it will, and do not rule it ; till at last, leaving it wholly undisciplined, we are borne away by its untrained desires into misfortune or wrong. It is a wild tribe of qualities we have within, not an ordered and law-abiding polity. Now is our time, now while we are shut out from life and joy, to learn something about ourselves, to know where we are, what we have become, and what we are made of within. Therefore, in the dim room of our heart, while the storm roars outside, let us light the lamp of thought, and sit down at our table to read our life. It is not always good to examine oneself too closely ; but it is good then ; and

it will not only give us self-knowledge, but the effort will strengthen our brain and our heart, and make us fitter through that strength to bear and conquer our darkness. At first it will seem impossible ; for sorrow and gloom enfeeble, and pain bewilders ; but it is the only active thing we can do, and therefore we ought to do it. There is no way of getting any power or courage but by effort. Make this effort ; and though for some days we may see nothing and not be able to think, the mind, driven always by the will, is forced at last to do its work. The lamp of thought will burn brightly, and we shall see our life.

All the materials are there within us—the events, feelings, acts, thoughts, and dreams of many years. When we have read the story they tell, traced them to their causes, looked steadily at their results, generalised their evil and their good, we shall at last have a clear vision of ourself; know our dangers and our temptations, our rightness and our wrong, our strength and weakness. We have then got a firm ground on which we can build up our future life, and hereafter we shall thank God for the darkness that forced us to light the lamp of thought.

But with it we must needs burn another light, the light of Truth. Thought without truthfulness, without sincerity with oneself, is little good. In every soul, but often stowed away in some forgotten corner, truth lives or sleeps. We are seldom real with ourselves, but we can be real if we wish. And it is often only the shadows of life which force us to be so. We are stripped of our excuses ; we can no longer palter

with ourselves, and God drives us to take out the lamp of truth and light it. To kindle it frankly, to trim its light, to place it beside the lamp of Thought, and to look without flinching, by its rays, at all that thought shows to us, is the rightful claim of God on us, and our foremost need and duty. For, if we come out of the darkness still self-deceived, what hope is there for us? If, while we meditate, we weave a veil of sophistry and excuse around our sin or fault or folly, then our meditation will only double our ignorance of our life and our weakness of will, and increase the drift of our nature towards wrong—when the sunshine has come again. Oh, be sincere in these hours with yourselves, look down into the very depths of your life, and see it all, and judge it all, with unsentimental honesty.

Indeed it is time we took some trouble about it. We know our houses, we know our business, our books, our trade: we master them in thought, and we have no rest till we know the very truth about them. But what of the inner house, of the business of the thoughts and passions and senses and imagination, of the dark room where the lumber of life lies rotting, of chambers of imagery which we have not cleared away and which a swift temptation may cause us to visit, that there we may worship evil; what of the trade we drive in the forum of the soul, of the books of good and evil which God will open when He calls us to judgment? What do we know truthfully of these things? And yet life, death, and eternity hang upon our knowledge of them. Therefore in the days of shadow, let the lights of thought

and truth burn in the quiet gloom. Truthfully, sternly let this work be performed !

Then when that work is done, it is easy to gird up the loins of our mind in readiness for a new life. The new life will come ere long, the time when the sun will rise again. We must be ready for it, with our loins girded. Shadow and darkness do not always last, except when we ourselves love our darkness, and cherish our gloom. There are complaining, lazy, mournful people who never gird up their loins, nor light their lamps, and who never find light ; and then they say that God has doomed them always to sorrow. But I am sure that it is their own fault ; the cases in which there is no chance are as rare as comets. I am as certain that we shall get into sunlight, or comparative sunlight again, if we are looking for it and ready for it, as I am that we deserve to stay in darkness and shall stay in it, if we cry ourselves asleep. Chances, as we call them, come, and we miss them. Why ?—We have let ourselves be paralysed with misfortune. New openings for life, full of sunshine, are shown to us, but we have allowed pain to blind our eyes. Had we lit our lamps, it would not have been so.

Sometimes it is different ; we are not blind or paralysed, but we are unready. The new way opens, and we see it ; the call comes, and we hear it ; we are awake and desirous. But our loins are not upgirt ; we are encumbered with wrongdoing or with regretful looking back ; we cannot move quickly enough, and the way closes, and the light fades, while we are getting ready. We cannot seize our chance, and all our life long we are

sorry. Every one knows how common that is. In himself, in others, he has seen the thing.

Therefore another temper of mind, and as religious a one as the last, is needful in times of shadow: the temper of readiness for the time, when action is possible, when the sunlight dawns. It is to have the loins girt up like a runner waiting for the signal. What has he done? He has laid aside all the garments that encumber him; and stands alert and accinct for his course. And that is the next bit of our work in the days of darkness; To get rid of our encumbrances. There is the spirit of selfish greed—As long as it clings to us, what true life can we lead, what sunshine can we use? There are all the old cares about making money, and pushing our way in the world, and getting into society, and being well with social opinion, of which we thought so much till the shadow fell on us and told us their worth. There is the wrong thing which we took to our heart, and loved, and half love still, even though it makes our shadows deeper. These are some of the heavy garments which we must throw off, if we would be ready and up-girt for a brighter and a nobler life. For, if we keep them by us, half unconsciously, thinking we have laid them aside, while we still hope to use them again when happier days return, they will cling round our feet when we are called on to act, and we shall not be able to start when God says to us, 'Begin again.'

Just as evil is that constant looking back with sorrow, as if all life was in the past, which so often marks the days of darkness. It is not memory of and

gratitude for joy and good and love ; it is memory of and wild regret for lost joy and lost good and lost love ; wild sorrow for wrong, tending to remorse and despair ; constant hopeless loitering round the graves of the past, bitter crying for the dead. Oh, how can we go forth into the new morning, or hail the deliverance with the Israelites, or follow the risen Christ into the sunshine of Galilee, if we are encumbered with the grave-clothes of the past ? Cast off regrets ; let the dead bury their dead ; stand forth free of the past, and girt for action, while still in the gloom ; look forward, waiting for the dawn, alert and ready. And do this work at once, without delay, in the midst of the darkness. To-morrow the way may open, the call may come, the sunlight break upon your life. If you are not ready, look for endless sorrow. Take care, lest

Work and will awake too late, to gaze  
After their life sailed by, and hold their breath.

2. The same things hold good when shadow comes on a whole household. If all could do the kind of work I have described as done within the heart, within also the circle of their home, it would be well. But there are many who cannot, who have neither experience enough nor strength enough ; children and young people, the feeble or the unwise, the very sad or the very sick. It is then that the man or the woman, who has power through goodness, or has won power through such effort as I have spoken of, may, in the very centre of gloom, keep their household with its loins girt and its lights burning. Not much better or more beautiful

work is done in the world than that which supports a home thrown suddenly into dire poverty, or a household that has to struggle year by year against a sea of troubles. How is it done? Oh, be sure, some one has lit there the lamps of Memory and Thought and Truth. Yes, it is good, when darkness has come, to keep the whole house in the remembrance of sunlight; to take care to talk over happy days together; to recall the beauty of them, and the love that made them bright; to keep up the anniversaries of the past; to encourage children and mother and father to remember the tender joys they shared, the associations which bind them in love together; and to do this memorial work with cheerful and natural delight, not with sad and vain regret. That is brave and true, and it has its reward. It makes a cheery and courageous spirit live and rule in the house. It binds all so close together in love that the whole household is knit together like one phalanx for the conquest of misfortune. It fits them, through joyful memory of sunlight, to enjoy sunlight when it shines. It keeps gratitude to God alive, and in the midst of darkness we hear with reverence, not the voice of complaint, but the voice of praise. It keeps gratitude to Man alive, and we see with delight, in the midst of misfortune, a household that believes in human goodness, and rejoices in the good fortune of men. It is a beautiful vision, and it does the heart good. And it is as good for the household itself. For do you not see that this is the temper which emerges with undiminished energy, from the shadow of life?

Nor does the man or the woman who has done this for their home, by lighting their lamp of Memory, neglect to light in their household the lamps of Thought and Truth. The work they have done in their hearts, they do in their home. In these times of darkness it is of first-rate importance to take stock of the qualities and powers and possibilities of all the characters in a household; and to do this with sincerity, by that light of truth which in this case means justice to each, which excludes petty and fanciful dislikes, and favouritism and neglect. Having been quite truthful with ourselves, we can get truthfully to the bottom of our household, and take pains that everyone may know each other's character and what each are good for. We can then take stock, not only of its characters, but of its ways and means, and of all that is hidden in it and done in it, to the remotest corner; we can set the whole household to find out all the material in the house, so that everyone may know the exact truth about every shade of character, and every power it has.

Then having kindled in the household the lamp of Truth, kindle in it also the lamp of Thought. Think yourself, and get everyone freely to think with you. As much as in your inner life you took all your qualities into counsel, so now take all the members of the household into your thought for the house. Talk over what was before the misfortune, try to find its causes, if it had any from within your home. Read the story of the life of home; get together and realise the collective powers you have with which to fight against the darkness, so that whenever the light comes you may

be ready to use them all. See clearly the strength and weakness, right and wrong of each, and set their wills to make the strong things quench the weak, and the good overcome the evil. And, having made all the whole house think out these things, organise all the knowledge you have gained, and organise it with the help and consciousness of all, so that each may feel himself a living member of the body. Organise the whole home into one compact bright and active body, in which each knows himself and his powers, and others and their powers, and all are accustomed to work together. Will that not be interesting work? Do you think misfortune can make you lazy or dull then, or do your mind harm? Do you think you can brood then till moss grows over your brain and your heart sickens into a morass? No, in this way you get the good of shadow, and you are ready for sunlight. People are surprised to see you so bright; to see the children, even the old people, not cast down, but full of intelligent interest, the day full, when there seems nothing to do; and they ask the secret. 'Our lamps are lit,' you answer; 'we are getting ready for the day, for the new work and life which are coming. And our loins are girded up. We have found out what is wrong and stupid and worldly-wise only in our house, and have put it out of our midst. We have not ceased to look at what is beautiful, and tender, and true, and loving in the past; but we have ceased to pore over what is gone by with exhausting regret, ceased to linger among decay, to weight ourselves with remorse or sorrow. All that encumbered us is cast aside, and we stand alert, girt up

like runners who listen for the starter's cry, in fine training, foot and eye and ear and heart all keeping time. And when the cry comes, when God opens His path for us; when the sunlight streams and shows our way—we shall rush forward.'

Is not that a moral life? Everyone sees that the household that can so live through shadow is, at every point, winning moral power, and strengthening every moral quality. And it can be made more than moral. Every hour of it may be made religious. It is here that the third temper of the mind needed in shadow enters in. It is the temper not only of waiting, but of waiting on God. It is not only faith in coming sunlight, but faith in God as bringing it to our household. We feel, and we make all in our home feel, that God our Father cares for us, and will by and by send us light. A strange and inspiring certainty comes with that belief, and it sends additional vigour into the work of thinking and of truth, adds a new touch of tenderness to the work of memory, and a splendid vigour and energy to the driving out of sin and the destruction of enfeebling regrets. We are not alone, not a little household lost in the big world. We are cared for, and God will give us sunlight again. Why, of course, with that faith, the whole household is set forward, working with courage, out-looking with as much eagerness as Columbus for the new land. Always stand upon the prow of the ship, and believe in God.

Still more is our dark time made religious when we know that our shadow is a part of our education by God. It is the result of certain known causes. But, beyond

these, a Father's educating love is visible in it, and He is going with us through it all; not forcing us to be good like a paternal despot, not doing our work for us, but so modulating His help, as to make us work out our answer to sorrow and our strength though misfortune, for ourselves; watchful to the last for the intellectual and spiritual independence of all in our household. To know and believe these things, is waiting for the Lord.

And its results are, first, that we love God, when we, one and all at home, believe in Him in this way. And this love of God makes all our work happier and better and truer. A higher motive than those of earth enters into our household, and strengthens and refines the high motives of earth. A mighty aspiration to be like Him whom we love kindles and exalts all our work, and by its beauty illuminates our darkness; and all our labour, done 'ever as in our great Taskmaster's eye,' looks beyond this world and shares in eternal hopes. And, secondly, this faith in God and love of Him, while we wait, binds the whole household together by a stronger and nobler tie than even mutual love. All the different characters meet on a common ground, and, fixed in a common faith, worship together with a common love. There is not only a natural but a spiritual communion; and the spiritual communion does not weaken, but strengthen, the natural communion; for all true human love is deepened by love of God. Then the work is finished and the whole household is welded together.

And now, what is this last temper of mind in us personally, when our own personal lonely darkness comes on us? Having lit our lamps, and done the work they

set for us in solitude ; having made ourselves ready for the day—then our true temper is to wait for the Lord ; to have faith in His love, to take our gloom of sorrow, of doubt, of illness, of misfortune, as a part of His education, to draw nearer to Him in love and trust and humbleness of heart. But while we are thus humble and patient, we know also—and to this all our work has tended because it has set us forward, and to this our faith in darkness being education has tended, because no educator gives nothing but difficulty and trial—that the sunlight must come to us. We wait not for greater darkness, but for the coming light. It must come, since we are ready for it. How long it may take coming, none can tell ; but it does come. ‘To him who works and knows he works, this same new year is ever at the doors.’ And many of us have known what it is to pass out of shadow into sunlight. In the gloom of doubt, when God Himself has seemed at times a dream, and all shook under our feet ; a sudden thought, a touch from a book, a sentence from a friend, has sent the light over the horizon, and all things have become clear. In the misery of sorrow, a sudden rush of new love has illuminated life. In the nameless wretchedness which through the beating of obscure distress seemed to make all life impossible, even though effort was continuous—a journey, a change of life, has given us health again, and lo, the whole world is new : our joy in the woods and skies and hills rushes back : we know again what beauty means ; our life is born again. These are changes not unknown to us, and when they come, we rush forward, like ships that long in harbour,

bound by contrary winds, hear at last blowing over the hills the wind from land. Then in the new life we have the use and good of all the work we have done in the darkness. Everything tells, and our gain is almost infinite.

And oh, still more is this true, when, having wrought truthfully and believed nobly, we at last enter the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and find ourselves on the skirts of the great darkness. We enter it with our loins girded and our lights burning, and with infinite faith, waiting for the Lord. The darkness falls, earth drops away; we cry: 'Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.' In the deep mist our eyes close; we open them, and lo! the light of God, and the sunshine of heaven, and the infinite landscape of eternity sleeping in the radiance. In utter joy we enter into it and begin our eternal work. Therein we shall have the use and good of all that we have done in the shadow of death; and the use of it will be to be of infinite use to others, and the good of it will be the good that we shall do and give to all that need our good. Therefore from beginning to end of life, let your loins be girded.

Lastly, there is one darkness, dreadful above all other darkness, and seemingly hopeless, when, resting under a cloud of sin, we have got entangled in wrongdoing: entangled, worst of all, in the wrongdoing that we love, hating the sin, but loving the thing; unable to get away, always repenting, always falling and again repenting, till the sin has become the habit of the soul, and to it we have sacrificed one by one all the good things of life—work, social movement, family,

honour, truth—till we finally throw God Himself into its fire, and resolve to do wrong. Out of this life, which has now become a curse, for the joy is gone out of the thing, it seems we can never get, and despair comes on us, or a dreadful recklessness. ‘There is no forgiveness of sins.’ In this deepest shadow of life, what hope?

What happens? That happens which will surely be made to happen hereafter, if not here. By the very fierceness of our punishment, we are strangely made to feel, not, as one would think most natural, that God is wrath, but that God is love. I cannot say how it is done, but it is done; and so wonderful it is, that it is wholly inexplicable, except on the supposition of a Divine Father who cares for us. We—beaten down, filling our belly with husks, having wasted our whole inner life in riot, feeding the swine of evil, hungering with intolerable hunger, and knowing that all this is God’s punishment—think not of His wrath but of His love. We picture home, picture His smile, picture the comfort and blessedness of being near them, and cannot help feeling at the very bottom of our hearts that He will give us these things, if we go to Him. All His Fatherhood rushes on us wholly, and our hearts are broken with the remorse of love. Then out of the depths comes the cry, ‘I will arise and go to my Father.’ All eternity rings with that cry. Thousands of sinners who have left this world, feel it coming to their lips. The gates of Heaven are always open; God is always meeting His lost and dead sons at their entrance. You who are now in despair from sin, gird up your loins and run home to God. Through all

eternity, till all be saved, will the sinner's cry be heard, and the wanderers be delivered from the shadow of sin.

But we are bound to get out of that shadow here. Remember past innocence, be truthful with yourselves, think like men who have to redeem the past, and to fill the future with goodness. Cry to your Father for help, ask passionately for His redemption, be incessant in prayer, and then you may watch and wait for the sunlight, for the goodness of God. Watch ! that is the one note that Time's great bell is always tolling—through the light dance of youth, through the slow movement of manhood, through the dead march of old age, that bell rings out its solemn cry—Watch, watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. Watch, for you know not when the master of the house cometh : at evening, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning. Watch ! with your loins girded and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord.

[July 28, 1878.]

*THE WORK OF INSPIRATION.*

After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, &c., &c.'—REVELATION vii. 9-12.

In this chapter Jewish and Christian elements appear together, but the Jewish element has the upper hand. The writer of the book, whoever he was, and surely he was not the author of the fourth Gospel, is a passionate, even a bigoted Jew. His whole world, both present and future, is mainly a Jewish world.

Leaving out the many proofs of this in the book, look only at this passage. The mighty angel who holds back for a time the messengers of the four winds from their destroying mission on the earth, till he has sealed with the seal of protection the servants of God, seals first one hundred and forty-four thousand of the tribes of the children of Israel. He names the tribes one by one, as worthy of special honour. In his mind they were the aristocracy of heaven. They alone ate of the fruit of the tree of life, and the Gentiles only of its leaves. But, Jew as he was, and proud of his spiritual pre-eminence, he was not the Jew of old, who

would not have thought at all of the Gentiles as in Heaven, who would not have written of them as worshipping God along with the Jew. For, as he goes on, the Jewish exclusiveness lessens, a larger charity opens out a larger landscape ; and he breaks into a Christian rush of imagination—when, around the throne of God and with the elect among the Jews, he sees a crowd of martyrs and confessors rise, of all nations and kindreds, and people and tongues, clothed in white robes and with palms in their hands ; all those who over the whole Gentile world had died for the faith of Christ, and listens to them crying with a loud voice, ‘Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne.’

A French critic, in his anxiety to prove the extreme Judaism of the writer of this book—an anxiety which leads him to say that the author had a special enmity against the Apostle Paul—does away with this distinction between the one hundred and forty-four thousand Jews and the great multitude. The great multitude is composed, he says, of martyrs, not of converted pagans. The one hundred and forty-four thousand are chosen out of all the world as super-excellent Jews, and the others, though originally some of them were Gentiles, are conceived by the writer of the Revelation as Israelites. To the Jewish mind of that writer there was no such thing as a Gentile Christian. The pagans who had become Christians were members henceforth of the spiritual Israel, and were false disciples unless they conformed to the rules of Judaism. They ceased to be Gentiles, and were to be called Jews, and thought

of as Jews. Some of the one hundred and forty-four thousand then might have been originally Gentiles.

In all this, he is led away, I think, from the simplicity of the passage by his desire to make it fit in with his theory. It is much simpler (and the simpler meaning is always the most natural, most likely to be true) to say that here we have a very Jewish Christian, who puts his own nation first, and thinks his own people the holiest and the highest, and then, having put them in their place, passes on to think and speak of the Gentiles who had died bearing witness to Christ. And we can scarcely give any other meaning to the phrase, 'of all nations and kindreds, and people and tongues.' There is not a word in the whole passage which would lead us to think, if we had no theory, that the writer conceives these martyrs as Jews, or as Judaised Gentiles. On the contrary, he separates them in thought into another band. 'After this,' he says, after the sealing of the Jews, 'I beheld a great multitude.'

At any rate, what I have first to say is not affected by this difference of explanation. It is this--That Inspiration did not take away the natural individuality of this writer. It did not make a miraculous change in his character or in his habits of thinking and feeling; it did not strip him of his nationality. He still remains the Jew, and with many of the prejudices of the Jew. But though it did not make his character new, it did expand it; though his habits of thought and feeling were not uprooted, they were extended. They shot forth new branches, soared higher, and spread forth to

cover a larger space. Though the prejudices remained, they were less hampering than before ; their growth was checked, they were often forgotten, they were lost in other things opposed to them. He passes often beyond the Jew ; he is swept away again and again into saying things, and into speaking of ideal hopes, that are both far more excellent and universal than were possible, had not the inspiration of God been upon him. He is exalted, not beyond himself, but within himself. He is himself in higher place. He ceases to be nothing but the Jew ; he becomes the Christian.

And this is always true of the matter of inspiration ; true of inspired writers of every age and nation—Jew, Greek, Roman, Englishman, now or in the past. They represent ideal truths, they set forth ideas which will only bear fruit hereafter. They are partly of their age, but they are always rushing beyond their age into the time and the temper of the time, when in the growth of the world, the truths they see will be realised. But their truths of the future are mingled up with the natural prejudices of their character, with the errors and the habits of their time, with the ignorances and the follies which seem to them knowledge and wisdom ; which *we* know now for what they were—ignorance and folly—but which we should have had ourselves had we lived at their time. If we want to get at the truth then of an inspired writer, we must first abstract these temporary things, all that belongs to the transient and to the national, and even to the special temperament of the writer ; that is, we must strip off the garments in which the truths were

clothed, if we would see the truths clearly. And the not doing this, and the insisting on the transient drapery of truths as of equal value with the truths, is just the thing which has made the Bible and its inspiration such a by-word among those who are in opposition to religion, and supplied them with their most successful weapons.

A few Sundays ago we read the song of Deborah. It is bitterly attacked. 'The blessing pronounced on Jael,' it is asked, 'is that the voice of God? Does He guarantee a murder which violated all the laws of hospitality, which slew a weary and sleeping man who had trusted himself to a woman?' The attack is quite just, if we say that inspiration guarantees that everything said by the writer to be the voice of God is actually to be considered as His voice. But when we say the opposite, when we put aside, as belonging to the rude and early time, the savagery, the treachery, and the praise lavished upon it, then we feel that it was quite natural to the time to say, 'Blessed be Jael,' but that God had nothing to do with it at all; and when we have said that, and then feel, as we must have felt, the wild and splendid patriotism of the whole song, and the joy that the cause of Israel had triumphed, and the rush in the words of a whole nation out of dreadful slavery into bright deliverance—why, there we get the universal human truth, the thing with which we thousands of years afterwards can sympathise, the thing which will stir the blood of Frenchman and German and American and Englishman, of all nations, at all times, —the rapture of victory over the oppressor—and there, there is inspiration.

So here, it would be expecting far too much, it would be an irrational demand, that a Judaist Christian and a strong one, should not, in describing the future kingdom, name the Jews first and give them the highest place ; and there, and in that, is the temporary and the transient element. All that is said about the one hundred and forty-four thousand is worthless to us. It has only an historical interest, in that it tells us how a Jew thought at the time this book was written.

But on the other side, it would be expecting too little if, being an inspired writer, he took no notice of the Gentiles unless as reckoned among the Jews. Were that the case, there would not be one touch of inspiration in the passage. The fact is otherwise. The change wrought by inspiration is a great one. It makes him pass from the particular to the universal, from the Jewish to a vast human point of view. He is describing the perfect kingdom. He sees the angel of God collecting the Jews from all quarters, and sealing them for salvation from the woes coming on the earth. As he writes of all this, he writes prosaically, he writes definitely. He numbers the elect, twelve thousand here, twelve thousand there, and so far he is in no way inspired. But, as he goes on, his heart begins to glow, his very words thrill him ; passion kindles, the spiritual life of God streams into him ; the Jewish scales fall from his eyes ; and now he sees a brighter and loftier vision. The gates of Heaven fly open, and at the glorious sight, he takes fire, and then the words come, pouring forth as it were in a torrent. He is raised out of the realm of prose into that of poetry ; the special-

ised gives place to the universal, the real to the ideal, the definite one hundred and forty-four thousand to a multitude no man can number; the tribes of Israel disappear in all nations and kindreds and people and tongues who stand before the throne. There! that is inspiration, and that is exactly the manner and the work of it.

As far as the verse, 'Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand,' it is nothing but the old Judaic thought. A Jewish high priest might have written it. Suddenly we plunge into a new element, out of the Jewish into the purely divine and the purely human. When we read the words 'After this I beheld, and lo! a great multitude which no man can number,' it is as if floating on a calm river, between high banks that shut us in, we were to awake after a night of sleep, and find ourselves, in sudden and glorious surprise, tossing on the bright and illimitable sea, in the splendour of a new sunrise. We have been in a little world of our own; we look round us now on the universe of God.

It is a picture of us and our change under the inspiration of God, an inspiration exactly of the same kind, though differing doubtless in degree, as that of the writer of this book. For that is one of the main points contained in all that I have said. Inspiration, the inbreathing of the spirit of God, and the exalting thereby of the whole nature of a man, so that thought is expanded into the statement of, and feeling exalted into the delight in universal truths—universal, because they belong to God's character, and because they are at one with that which is common to the whole race of

man—is not confined to a few writers in one book and belonging to one nation. It is universal, it belongs to all of us, is found in all peoples and tongues, is the right and the privilege of every man and woman. It is by it and through it that all spiritual, intellectual, moral, scientific, and artistic truth is spoken or expressed. It differs in men only in degree, not in kind, and the writers of the Bible have it eminently with regard to spiritual truths :—but their inspiration on spiritual truths, though its degree is far greater than that of others, is nevertheless the same in kind as that of the poor and ignorant preacher of truth who tells his tale of God's mercy to-day to a few wanderers in the streets.

When then, raised into the ideal region of divine truth, we perceive and rejoice in the universal ideas of God, and see things true for the whole race, we are inspired, and we may justly feel that we speak the very truth of God. The clothing we may give it may be all untrue, but the thought is divine and human, infallible and perfect. It is God Himself speaking in us as He spoke in Isaiah and David and Paul. And often and often the very change that inspiration wrought in the writer of the Revelation is wrought in us. For years we go on, with our Jewish tang, living and thinking in the midst of strange limitations of the grace of God, of the good news of Christ. We define the number of the saved, set apart the elect from the world ; seal here and there, now this man and now that, as converted, and shut out the rest ; setting forth our divisions between the children of God and the

children of the devil, and making an aristocracy of Heaven out of our sect or church ; thinking that those who do not hold our doctrine or practise our ritual cannot be Christ's ; excluding now the ritualist, and now the evangelical, and now the freethinker from our fold ; thinking it impossible to save the Roman Catholic or the Protestant, the Unitarian or the Deist, the Atheist or the Materialist ; and quite content with our position among the one hundred and forty-four thousand who are sealed against destruction. That is the uninspired condition, so far as the subject of salvation or of God's Fatherhood is concerned. I say so far as that ; for of course, often and often on other spiritual subjects, when we are deeply moved, we reach inspiration. But on that subject we are not inspired, as long as we limit and are limited.

One morning, it may be after having been long touched on many sides by the spirit of God, we reach the point at which a higher view is possible. An outer impulse of some kind strikes us and pierces through the crust of habitual thought. It may come in a hundred ways ; a rush of joy in a new love which enlarges the heart, a delight in some beautiful or sublime thing in nature or art or music, a sudden recollection, a deep emotion kindled by a hymn or a book or a sermon, a softening of the whole heart in sorrow ; whatever it be, it is something that moves and thrills the heart, and sets it beating with thankfulness to God, with joy and rapture in His love. We are uplifted into a new life. On that God's spirit seizes, and our prosaic and definite belief is drowned in a rush of

poetic and infinite love. Suddenly, we see Heaven open, and into its gates, rolled back for the whole universe, a multitude, swelling as eternity goes on until all have entered, pours in before our inspired eyes; numberless, of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues—and now we hear the outcry of thanksgiving and praise from the whole of redeemed mankind. ‘Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne. Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.’ That is inspiration.

And surely it is a thought eternal, beautiful, universal, true; abiding in it we cannot get wrong on any of the lesser thoughts that belong to it. When the primary thought is inspired, the secondary ones are also. When the poetic passion is concerned with a perfectly true thing, all that follows on that true thing is seen and expressed truly. Here, in this passage, the writer becomes, now that the first thought is true, absolutely right in all the symbols that he uses. Each adds to and enlarges the extent of his thoughts. All, being kept in the sphere of poetic symbol, keep their universal truth.

The redeemed are arrayed in white robes, and they have palms in their hands, and all the angels worship with them. These are the symbols. Purity is theirs, and victory, and all the sympathy of the heavenly host.

They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Shall I translate that? It seems I must; it has been so turned into intellectual propositions by the prosaic people who have invented

almost an actual blood of Christ. What is the blood of Christ? He tells us Himself. ‘He that dwelleth in Me and I in him eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood. Whoso drinketh My blood hath eternal life.’ Christ’s blood is the spirit of His whole life; His love poured forth in sacrifice for men; His self-devotion unto death for truth and righteousness sake—all concentrated, fulfilled, and brought to the point when on the cross He bowed His head and died. Drink in that spirit, and you possess, not only hereafter, but now, eternal life. It is life, and it alone. Bathe your heart and intelligence and imagination and spirit in the spirit of that life and death, till all that it was and means flows through your whole nature and life, as blood through your veins; wash all your outward life, your habits, your manners, your business, your doings at home and abroad, all the robes of your life, in the spirit which made Jesus pour forth His blood upon the Cross, and make them white and pure thereby; and then you will understand, nay, not understand, but know for ever, and live for ever by, the truth—that ‘the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.’ Yes, that is what the writer saw in this hour of inspiration; the mighty multitude of the saved, living by the spirit of Jesus’ love, by the power of Jesus’ life, and made all pure therein.

And they bore palms, for they were martyrs, witnesses of the truth and for the truth; men who, like Christ, had fought hard against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and won their victory, faithful unto death. There is no standing before the throne of

God, no place for us in that realm of the morning star, until we have been martyrs who have witnessed for truth, and overcome the evil. Neither the fearful nor the weak in holy will, nor those who yield to evil, can sing the song of the Lamb. No, we must win the palm, and be able to carry it with truth. It is pitiful if only in the other world we can begin that work, if only, through long suffering and pain, we have there, and not here, to learn that we must be conquerors and martyrs before we can join the great multitude and praise the Lord. Oh think, think of victory, not of defeat. It is a noble thought, worthy of men, and it makes life worthy. Keep the truth you know, bear witness to it everywhere; keep it pure from the temptations of the world; let not earthly fame, or future wealth lure you from allegiance to it; nay, if mortal pain or death should stand in its path, suffer them rather than fail in truth to truth. Keep that which is committed to you against that day; be the victor, and not the victim, of life. For when all the multitude whom no man can number is completed, there will be none among its palm-bearers who will not have known the labour and triumph of moral victory.

And as to the last great symbol, the image and picture of all the host of Heaven—Evangelists, and the living creatures full of eyes within, and angels and elders, and with these all the patriarchs and prophets and martyrs and saints, and the infinite world of the redeemed that singing in their glory move, and worship around the Master of man's soul and live in the ineffable light of God—that mighty conception of

Paradise that fills the canvas of the great painters, and is heard in the music of the great masters of song pouring forth its hallelujahs; which, in fashion like a snow-white rose, whose million million petals are each a snow-white soul, visited in turn by the angels who whisper peace and ardour, thrills like an actual thing in the Paradise of Dante—as to that great image, in which all that is human is mingled with all that is divine, in which one spirit fills with perfect love and unites into perfect union the whole of heaven with the whole of earth, and binds them all upwards into God whose light and love rain righteousness and joy upon them—of that most glorious image, what shall we say?

Nothing. It is enough, in hours of despondency, and fear, and temptation, and weakness, and death, to gaze on it and take courage, and strength, and life, and ardour, and victory from it, and rejoice and fix our eyes on the eternal light. For when we are worthy, when we are one of the great multitude, and all the darkness of sin is changed into the light of righteousness, and the sorrow of life into the joy of love, and the agony of our prayer into the rapture of praise, then our whole being, thought and feeling and labour, shall be expressed in the great song—Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

[May 24, 1879.]

*THE LAW OF GIVING.*

‘And He looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury.

‘And He saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites.

‘And He said, Of a truth, I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all:

‘For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.’

LUKE xxi. 1-4.

VIVID scene and vivid speech are here presented. The large open space between the boundary of the outer court and the inner shrine of the Temple was thronged with a crowd of people of all classes in Jerusalem—priests, Pharisees, worshippers with sacrifices, foreigners, Roman soldiers, beggars, sellers in their booths. Somewhere at the entrance of the Temple, or near it, stood, ~~in full view~~, the Treasury, where the faithful laid their offerings for the poor and for the worship of God. All the standers by could see those who gave alms. Many who were idle and curious watched the rich men who stately, to be seen of men, came to let their right hand know what their left hand gave. Many among the rich had nobler thoughts, but these gave quietly their offerings; and Christ loved them as He loved the widow. But this day as, standing apart with His disciples, He watched the stream of almsgivers, and saw in the conscious faces of the rich their desire

to be known of men, and to have their gifts proclaimed (for it seems, from Christ's knowledge of the two mites that make a farthing, that the amount of gifts was declared), He turned away weary and sad of ostentation. At last a poor widow came, quietly slipping through the crowd, sorrowful for her loss, but for that very reason anxious to relieve sorrow, pain in her heart, but finding healing for that pain in giving ; having nothing but a farthing, but that all she had, and giving that all. And Christ, looking on her, knew her heart, for it shone in her face. And perfect joy came to Him, for He saw His Father in her eyes, and felt that all the spirit of His own life that gave all, was in the woman's soul. He felt the inconceivable delight of sympathy with the absolute life of love in another ; the greatest and the most heavenly joy that our Saviour could have on earth. Swiftly He turned to His disciples, with enraptured eyes, and threw the whole meaning of the woman's act into words which in their poetic paradox reached so infinite a truth, that they have never been and never are forgotten. Their meaning is our subject.)

1. As Christ looked on the gifts of the rich men, He thought that the greatest gifts are valueless without pure motives.

Valueless in God's eyes, for we can offer Him nothing of that kind which He has not got. All the beasts of the forest are His, and so are the cattle upon a thousand hills. Would you offer gold to the king of Utopia, where the children play with it in the streets ? But if you offered love, would He refuse it ? It is that God cares for : He has not got it, perhaps, from

you, so He longs for it. You may give it Him, and enrich still more His life. The wealth of the whole world, could you lay it at His feet, would not make Him happier. But give a cup of cold water to the wanderer, because you love, and God's day is more joyful.)

( But such gifts are not only negatively valueless, but positively hateful to God, and for the same reasons for which they are valueless to the giver of them. The giver gives for vanity's sake, to be seen and praised of men.) Pride then adds itself to vanity, because the thing done is thought to be good by the doer. It is of that kind on which a man may congratulate himself alone. At every fresh gift the vanity increases and the pride ; in society the man is vain, in solitude proud ; till by the working of these two envenomed serpents, the root of fresh love, and the natural life of good are eaten away. The man is like the Sodom apple, glorious without, vile dust within. The gifts of such are valueless, harmful to the man, hateful to God.

Not only is this life false, but it seems true to the man. He thinks he is doing good, because the act in itself is good in others who do it purely, and because the world praises it. So he has the sense of being good without goodness, and the belief that he is loving without love. That is dreadful, because it will take almost a miracle to open his eyes. To be certain that we are right, and to be wrong, is sure shipwreck ; the soul is like a ship whose compass, without the captain's knowledge, has varied ; the only value he gets from his compass is that it leads him to the rocks.

Then, also, he gets, if he has not got so far into evil as this, a habit of valuing goodness by the measure of his gifts, and of appraising love by their number. And gifts can be measured and must be limited. 'I fast twice in the week,' said the Pharisee. 'I give tithes of all that I possess.' What is the certain result? It is that goodness and love which are infinite and immeasurable, are made finite and measurable to him. And then, of course, the ideal is no more, and aspiration dies; goodness becomes limited, and the soul, born to expand for ever, narrows to a nutshell. Life instantly loses all its beauty, all its charm;—joy all its infinity, and sorrow all its hopes. When love, the immeasurable, is measured, all things become mean. (Oh, give no gifts at all or give them from the free, unconsidered, loving, pure and rushing impulse of the heart. It is only when there is this generous love, that judgment and reason can justly decide how to give, or what and where to give.

(Not only are gifts of this falsely-motived kind valueless to God and to those who give them; they are also valueless to the receiver.) Of course gifts of money may be well spent by the treasury that receives them, being spent with love. But then it is not the original giver who is the source of their value, but those who bestow them kindly. But when (from any motive but a pure one) we give sympathy, or goods, or learning, or any of the things we can give, to another, that other feels them—so given—as valueless, and they are valueless. (For, given for pride's sake, or for vanity, or without love, or because the world expects them to be

given, they do not awaken love, but impose an obligation: they do not kindle gratitude, but torment the receiver inwardly, because he hates to be ungrateful, and yet is, and knows he is ungrateful. And the more that is given in this way and the greater the gift, the more is the obligation felt, the heavier it is, and the more it is resented.)

2. And now, the other thought of Christ follows, the thought that rose in His mind as He saw the widow casting her two mites into the treasury. (The smallest gifts are worthy when the motives are pure.

Were this not true, how little we could fulfil; but being true, how much more we can do than we think! Yes, how much more; for, in truth, one of the saddest things in life is that we imagine we have so little to give, and that it is not worth giving: and then, because we think that little not worthy to give, do not give it.

Did we love more, we should not think about it at all; but give unconsciously, as the violet gives its scent, and the clouds their colour, to the world. We want proof of our gifts being of worth; we want to see results; we desire to have so much gratitude; and when, having given, we see no proofs of the gift being of value, we draw in the horns of our giving. 'It is no use,' we say, 'I can give nothing worth giving;' and so we console ourselves for giving no more. (Perhaps we began to give with a pure motive; but when that speech and its thought is the result of our giving, we may be certain the motive did not continue pure. Had we continued to give from the heart, we should have asked no questions what became of our gift; we should

not have thought about it at all. As to its worth, we should have left that to the receiver, and not even asked who received it. (The widow never asked herself of what use was her farthing, or whom it would profit. She gave because her whole heart was full.

And when one gives in that way, everything is of value: of value to God, who delights in love; of value to ourselves, because the more of love we put into form, the more precious and beautiful love is, and the more its spirit deepens in us.) If we gather, and give away a flower from the plant of love in our garden, ten flowers spring up where one has been. There is no pause in the blossoming of love. The reward of love is increased power of loving.

Of value, too, to the receiver. It is just because there are people who, like this poor woman, give all they have, in the sorrow and joy of it, and without thought, that the world is so much more happy than we fancy it ought to be when we think of all its sorrow. It is wonderful with what small means love does great things. There are people whose very presence makes joy all round them, whose smile lightens sorrow and refreshes pain, whose very being breathes peace. They have often nothing of gifts to give, not even the widow's mite, but they give their heart away at every moment of their lives. Many of these are sick and sorrowful, and of broken lives. But they love those who are in health, and they delight in those who are joyful, and they smile on those whose life is perfect, and out of sickness and sorrow they bring sympathy and experience, consolation and courage to give away. Their

little means are multiplied a thousandfold, and Christ, looking on them, says :—‘They have cast in all that they had, and their gifts are worth a world of vain and loveless gold.’

For now, now that the heart is in the question, it is not ~~money~~ one thinks of as the gift which we throw into the treasury of the world (though money is made radiant by being stamped with love, and loses its coarseness when given by a beautiful manner), not money, but those gifts of the soul which anyone can give who does not think of self in giving them. The smallest of them, ~~purely offered~~, is of the greatest worth. You pass a man in sorrow, for a moment in life, and press his hand with a sudden impulse of ~~true~~ pity. Your voice is soft and your eyes. How little you have expended, but how much has been received—a world of comfort! A child runs to meet you with its flowers, its heart thrilling, eager for a word. You bend to kiss it, and your smile repeats the pleasure of your heart. How little? No, how much! it is unforgettable, infinite: the child remembers it for years.) Your friend is sick; you think how bright the day is, how sweet the grove where you are walking, how sad his room; how full your heart, how lonely his—and your heart takes the lime blossoms, and your hand brings them to his chamber. How little? Foolish thought! He breathes the woods, he walks there with his love, the birds sing, the flowers sweeten all the air, his youth is with him and his days of health, the room is filled with soft bright dreams. Little? Your gift, made rich by the aid of love you bring with you, is infinite; it creates

and enchant a world. Oh, can you not understand now what Christ meant? 'A cup of cold water given in My name, shall in no wise lose its reward.'

Yet they cost nothing, these tiny gifts ; you only felt joy in doing their giving ; what value can they have ? They have the value of their origin. Out of the natural infinity of love they came, and they are infinite. This poor widow hath cast in more than they all. Yes, more ; nothing but God's infinite sounding line could fathom the love in that poor woman's heart.

3. This then is the principle. (It is the heart, the motives, that fix the character of acts. This is the essence of Christ's morality. What we are within makes the act good or bad, noble or base, true or false, loving or selfish.) The act itself, so far as we and not its transitive results are concerned, is indifferent. Its quality is determined by the secret thought and emotion that lie behind it. (That was the root of moral and religious teaching, according to Christ ; and, laid down in the imperative, necessary, absolute manner in which He laid it down, without one single exception, or one single gloss, it revolutionised morality. Make the heart right, and all the rest of morality will follow as a matter of course.)

Therefore, of course, in this matter of giving, whether of wealth, or love, or sympathy, or help, or of the uses of our good and clever qualities, it is not the material part, not that which seems to men, that God regards, that earns His smile. How fair and beautiful it is to think that it is otherwise, quite otherwise ! How grateful to thought, and how true ! If giving

were measured by the standards of earthly value, the poor would not have the joy of giving, nor the weak. It ennobles all our view of the world, to know that the poor, weak, and lowborn, can have as much of the joy of giving, of that Kingdom of Heaven which is found in love, as the wealthiest, the strongest, and the greatest ; nay, may have often more of them. It is hard for the wealthy to give enough to give them rapture in giving ; it is hard for them to lose thought of money, to spend all they have upon the alabaster box of spikenard : and they often lose the power of giving by losing their will to give in overthoughtfulness. But (the poor) take their gifts out of their own comforts, often out of their daily needs ; take their care of the sick out of their rest, precious to their toil as water to the desert wanderers : nourish the orphan at their own loss, and feel the pressure of their love, not as a daily burden, but as a daily grace.) It is the poor who nourish the poor ; they give their farthing into the treasury, aye, all they have. And the plenteous love they gain is more than the riches which prevent the wealthy from this giving of all ; the joy they have is more infinite than his who can only contribute from an abundance. Blessed are the poor, said Christ ; and rightly indeed in this—for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven ; theirs more easily, naturally, if they will, is the kingdom of love. But even here, the heart equalises, and in spite of the drag of wealth, and the all but inevitable ugliness, and even meanness (in this way of considering things) which riches impose on life, there are wealthy men who are also rich in love ; who, by untiring beauty of sacrifice,

by giving their whole love to men, do truly cast in all they have, not by reckless giving, which would be wrong in them—for wealth makes its own duty—but *by themselves* by noble distribution.

Yet, however done, by poor or rich, and by whatever means, by giving of money or giving of sympathy, nothing is any good which is not done from the heart. That is the fact. No outside work profits, unless the inner life prompts it.) Dress a wax figure, as nobly, splendidly as you please, weary yourself with changing its dresses, robe it as Pericles, or Titian, as a great warrior or a great prophet, it will not speak, or paint, or fight, or love the right. And yet that is what half the world are trying to do, or believe can be done. They think by giving form that they can give life; blind to the truth Christ made so clear, not only in religion, but in all things, that only out of life can true form grow. No knowledge is any good to a man who does not love truth; nor can he make such knowledge, if he can be said to have it, of any good to others. No culture makes a man really cultivated who does not love beauty. He is like a garden of sand in which pluckt flowers and shells are disposed by the children; every day the flowers must be renewed, and the garden gives no joy. But the true lover of beauty is like the true garden that takes its seeds from the winds, and draws beauty from the daily dew and rain and sun of life, and makes every nook gracious and fair and fragrant with flowers that spring from living roots. No mere knowledge of poetry can make a man love nature or human nature, or make

others love it; no knowledge of the history of art can make a man love art, or comprehend it, or make others love it. (No giving, no sacrifice is of any beauty or any use without love. 'Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.' But, if we give a farthing in the widow's spirit, it is profit ~~if we love truth and beauty and men and God,~~ everything we do and say awakens, kindles, helps and ennobles man, and all our own life is beauty and delight. Happy those who have this lyre in their hearts, and in their nature this music which all their actions play! Their whole life will become a harmony conformed to the heavenly tune of Love, to whose eternal beauty God and the motion of the spheres are set.

4 Lastly; As I have said at the beginning that this kind of giving makes God happy, and is therefore the most ideal thing man can do; so also, now, at the end, I say, it has this last and wonderful good—that it makes men full of thanksgiving to God.

In those who give, it kindles so much joy and peace, and both are so divine, that the giver knows he has God in his heart, and breaks into thanksgiving. A loving life is a thankful life. Those who love have no leisure to complain of God or of men, or to make themselves unhappy. They have only time to give thanks.

And to those to whom such gifts are given the gifts restore hope and faith in man and God. They make the poor, and the sorrowful, and the lonely feel that God cares for them, because men care for them. The wretched are given, not only help, but a Father and

Brother. Love binds classes, characters, nations, diverse as colours, into one ~~brotherhood~~; nay, it clasps Heaven and earth in one embrace.

And St. Paul, thinking thus when he saw the Church of Corinth eager at his word to give ~~with one accord~~ to the poor ~~of Jesus~~ whom they had never known ~~all their wealth~~, broke out, rejoicing in the love Christ had kindled in humanity, 'Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift; '—the gift of Love. What a glorious, choice cry! It is as if all the angels and saints of God had, in their infinite rose of light, sung with one voice the words, and sent them down to the Apostle, so worthy of Paradise are they.

[December 2, 1877.]

*THE DAY OF THE LORD.*

‘The night is far spent, the day is at hand.’—ROMANS xiii. 12.

IT is more than eighteen hundred years since the Apostle uttered this exulting cry. We cannot repeat it to-day when once more we come to our advent time, without some sense of hopelessness. For what has come of it, we ask; is the night gone, is the day at hand? Century after century, with the indestructible aspiration of the heart, has this note of joy been taken up, and the aspiration has been disappointed and the joy unreached. New nations have been formed since St. Paul spoke; the whole of Europe rebuilt; the whole fabric of society again and again radically changed; men have perished in thousands for duty and for God, and all have perished in this hope: the drama of mankind has been charged with so much action, apparently wasted, and so much suffering, apparently squandered, on the ground of this incessant hope, and yet the great end seems no nearer. On and on, stumbling in the night, with bleeding feet and wearied brain, the great world has struggled forwards, hoping for the dawn. Out of the darkness it cries to the watchman, ‘Watchman, what of the night?’ and the answer falls,

‘The night is far spent, the day is at hand.’ A fresh hope kindles in the world’s breast at the reply, and again it staggers onward, lifting weary eyes to the horizon. ‘There is no radiance,’ it mutters, ‘on the mountains yet. I hope for ever, that is my doom; but the night is deep and the day delays. Would God I could see the morning glow !’

Do we not feel that? A smile, half bitter, half of that infinite sadness which more than all else makes us conscious of our immortal birth, wanders on our lips as we read the Apostle’s words and look around, it seems in vain, for their fulfilment. Yet, is it not strange? This persistent heart of ours will not be silent; still it contradicts the cooler judgment; still, as if there were no argument in the failure of so many centuries, it re-echoes the cry of St. Paul, and echoes it even with his enthusiasm. Against experience, against failure, against reasoning, it repeats and believes the voice. ‘The night is far spent; the day is at hand.’

How shall we settle the question between the denial the judgment makes and the assertion of the heart? ‘Christ is not coming, the night is not far spent.’ ‘Christ is coming, the day is at hand.’—Surely both cannot be right. Nay, we answer, why not? Both are portions of one truth, both balance one another. One asserts the negative, the other the positive side of the matter. If I say to a man in good health, ‘You are not a dying man,’ my denial is right; the hour of his death is far away. If again I say to him, ‘You are a dying man,’ my assertion is also right, though in a modified way. For at every moment and

day by day a portion of his frame is dying. That is being hourly represented in him which will take place in a complete way when the whole of his body is dissolved in death.

So, when I say, 'Christ is not coming now, the hour of the regeneration of the universe is far away,' my denial is right ; but when I say, 'Christ is always coming, the regeneration of the world is going on day by day and year by year ;' when I say that in the redemption of a single man, in the revolution of a nation's thought, in the birth of a new and saving idea in Europe, that is being done in part which will be completed when the whole race is redeemed, I am also right, and my heart knows the truth of it.

St. Paul was wrong when he expected the final close in his own time ; but he was right in this, that a new day was near at hand. We are wrong when we think we are near to the last great hour of time, but we are right when our heart tells us that God is coming to bring light to our own souls, to awaken our nation out of wrong into right, to set on foot new thoughts which will renew the life of mankind. For that is His continuous and divine work.

The reason then denies the nearness of the time when God will close this era of this world, and denies it on account of the slowness of God's work. In reality God's work is never slow or fast ; it always marches at a constant pace ; but to our sixty or seventy years it seems of an infinite tardiness. We live and grasp our results so hurriedly, and we have so short a time in which to work, that we naturally find ourselves

becoming impatient with God. To work quickly seems to us to work well. But we forget how, even in our little life, we lose the perfection of results by too great rapidity. We seclude no hours of wise quiet, and our thought is not matured. We do not finish the little bye-things of life in our eagerness to reach the main end, and years after we find that neglect of them has spoiled our work. We keep the solution of our life always stirring, and the crystals can never form for want of peace. We are so eager to develop that part of our nature that pleases us most that we neglect the other parts for want of whose powers we bring no labour to perfection ; and when we die, are doomed to go back in our progress, in order to educate those parts of our nature which we have neglected.

God never makes these mistakes, the mistakes of haste. He never forgets to let a man, a nation, the whole of mankind, rest at times, that they may each assimilate the results of an era of activity. He never omits to finish the out of the way parts of work, to make the side steps necessary ; and millions of these are needful in order to get finish in His work. He never, in hurry to the end, neglects to develop this, or over-develops that, in mankind. Every particular part is done in harmony with every other and for the interests of the whole. Think only what He does in this speck in the universe—the education of the whole race and of every person in it ; the fitting of every character so as to finally exalt every other, as well as to perfect the whole ; and then the harmonising of this labour here with the labour done throughout a thousand other

worlds—and who can then complain of the slowness of His work ; who can think that in six or twenty thousand years the great close can be at hand ? That day of the Lord is far away.

And this is supported, as far as analogy can support it, by the story of the growth of the earth. Myriads of years have passed away since the building of the crust of the earth began. Every inch of sedimentary strata represents long generations of animal life. The geologist has to live in eternity, as it were—must, to understand the history of the globe, assume infinite time. He who thinks of the growth and education of man must live in the same atmosphere of thought. We have only been here for a fraction of the time that we shall need to be here, before all we have to learn and do in this time-dispensation can be done. The thought of this is one of the side contributions that science makes to Theology.

Look at the rudimentary state in which great problems lie which we know will need centuries to bring to a perfect solution. It is only within the last two hundred years that science found the true method of investigating and conquering nature. And the wisest natural philosophers will tell you that they seem to stand on the threshold alone of knowledge. We have only approached the questions of education, of the healing of crime, of bringing classes together, of capital and labour ; we have scarcely touched the vaster question of international union, of confederated nations. We are still, like barbarians, unable to settle questions which involve nations and the whole welfare of the human

race, except by the ruinous way of war. In the case of our own religion—Christianity itself, after eighteen centuries, and centuries of activity of thought, is still wholly undeveloped. Men talk of its being effete. It has scarcely got out of its stormy and blundering youth; all kinds of old tags of superstition derived from heathenism and philosophies still cling to it; it cannot as yet get rid of intolerance and bluster, and narrowness, and bigotry, and rigid standards of opinion—the natural sins of youth. It has not got out of its shell yet and moved into the great world, so as to take part in all questions. Its principles have not yet been formulated towards universal action, and applied to social, municipal, state, national and international life, as they will be by-and-by when it is freed from the curse of churches that claim to be its sole depositories, when theology will consist only of the development of the great ideas Christ gave to the world, and not of intellectual and limited statements of ideas which are spiritual and illimitable.

Why, the more we look reasonably at all these things, the more mankind seems to be in its boyhood. The wiser we grow the more we become conscious of a thousand questions starting up around us which will take thousands of years to solve. The landscape of the future spreads without limit before us; full of promise, but full also of infinite work which must be done carefully, before the powers of man are brought to fruit, before the elements necessary for the perfection of mankind can be assimilated and changed into a universal life. The day of the Lord is not at hand. And when

we are not overridder with the notion that Europe is the world we feel this still more. We forget, when we talk foolishly of the exhaustion of Europe, that the world is not, at least, exhausted, and that, if Europe has reached manhood, there are nations only just born, as America and Australia, and other lands in which national life is only in embryo, as in Africa. These will have to give their full work to man, and they will run a career of thousands and thousands of years. The day of the Lord cannot come till all the people of the whole earth have added their finished work to the vast personality of mankind. These then are some of the reasons for the denial by the reason of the nearness of the final day of the Lord—the known slowness of God's work, the rudimentary character of knowledge and civilisation and religion, the youth of half the nations of the world.

But, secondly, though that great day is far away, the heart asserts, and truly, that when there is deepest night over nations and the world and men, a day of the Lord is at hand ; that a dawn is coming—not the last day, not the final dawn, but the uprising of Christ in light, deliverance, knowledge and love. The belief is born not only out of our natural hatred of evil and suffering, and the desire to be freed, but out of actual experience. There have not only been in all times prophets and poets who have prophesied and sung of salvation and judgment, but the words in which they expressed the voiceless cry of the world have been fulfilled. Light has come on darkness, life on death, knowledge on ignorance, freedom on slavery. The

glory of the Lord has been revealed, and all flesh has seen it together.

In one sense St. Paul was wrong, as we have said ; but in the spirit of his cry he was right. He looked forth on the night of heathendom, and through it and rising in it, he saw the dawn of Christianity. To Corinth, Ephesus, Athens, Galatia, he himself had brought the sunlight. And it was already spreading ; already over the whole sky the rays of the day of the Lord were glancing upwards ; and not two hundred years after his prophecy—‘ The night is far spent ’—the sun of a fresh life for intellect, imagination, heart and spirit, stood in the zenith of a new created world.

Again the night sank down and again arose a new dawn, and again and again the same thing was renewed, till at last the night of priestly despotism lay heavy on the souls of men, and Christianity itself in its ancient seat had ceased to be Christianity. The worship of wealth, of lust, of dominion, of sensuous beauty and knowledge, had eaten up the worship of God. But the light of God cannot be quenched. Behind the darkness came a brighter sun. Far in Northern Europe there were watchmen on the height, sick of the darkness, longing for the dawn. And their longing gave birth to faith, and faith to the prophecy—that prophecy, deepest of all in the forerunners of Luther—‘ The night is far spent, the day is at hand.’ Christ was coming was their cry. Not as they thought, any more than as Paul thought, did He come ; not to final judgment, but in the freedom of the human spirit, in the overthrow of old abuses, in a wiser faith, in the rivers of new ideas

which were poured forth on Europe out of the urn of the Reformation.

Again and again have these days of the Lord come, has the night vanished and the sunlight burst on the world, not only, as in these two examples, in religion, but in the regeneration of societies, in the revolutions of nations, in the rush of great and creative thoughts over the whole of the civilised world. Men sunk in misery, ignorance and oppression cried to the watchers, and the prophets answered, 'The night is far spent; we see the coming day.' And never has their answer been left unfulfilled.

To mark out the movements to and fro of these days of the Lord, to find their causes, to get and fix the ideas which, proclaimed, brought life and light and freedom to man, is the philosophy of history. To believe that God is educator of man, is immanent in mankind and directs these movements and inspires these ideas, is to know God in history; and it is this conception of the education of the world marching onwards through successive waves of darkness to brighter and brighter days of the Lord, by the working in all mankind of God's divine and impelling spirit, which makes life so intensely interesting, that it would be miserable to die, did we not believe that our knowledge of this work of God, and our living interest and labour in its progress, would deepen, not diminish, after death. Yes, this is the conception which comforts and strengthens the heart in evil, in gloom, in death; which redeems our sorrow when we look at the pain and sin of man; which calms the heart when

the judgment relegates to far-off ages the last redemptive coming of the Lord ; and which, in times of crisis and unbelief like our own, kindles our hope into a flame, till blazing into a beacon fire on our watch-tower in the gloom, we can cheer by its light into energy for Christ many a sleeping spirit, and bid many a despairing heart awake and take courage—for we cry, and cry again, in prophetic certainty, ‘The nigh is far spent, the day is at hand.’

Nor are the principles and the history here given less true of our own personal life. Many of us are living in the night, and sorrowful work it is ; with some it may be the gloom of a ruined or spoiled life. Our love has been shattered or our home destroyed ; dishonour, some bitter mistake, and neither of our own making, have poured the night around us. Our life is touched to its very heart, its spring is broken. Or the gloom in which we live may be the gloom of unbelief or of sin. We cannot reconcile the conclusions of the intellect with the hopes of the spirit. We are cut adrift from our old moorings and are tossing starless on the sea in which all our old faiths have sunk, it seems, for ever. Still worse, if some dark sin has seized our life and led us into inward ruin for a time, and brought in its train the fierce and dread companion, whose teeth fixed in our heart and gnawing it day by day, make him well called remorse ; and with remorse, despair—despair of recovery, despair of light, despair of work and life. Out of these depths of darkness, bitter and loud is our cry, ‘ Watchman, what of the night ? will the night soon pass ? ’ In hopelessness, with unbelief in light, we cry.

But the answer given us in the name of Christ is the answer of St. Paul—an answer I speak to you who are in gloom at this Advent time: ‘The night is far spent; the day is at hand.’

We hear, but cannot believe it. Our judgment denies the answer. ‘It cannot be,’ we reply; ‘no day will dawn for me. My life is broken, broken so utterly that it cannot be mended. I have nothing left. In the bitterness which fills my soul, in its salt and biting waters, all that made life worth the living is drowned and dead.’ ‘Nor for me,’ cries another, ‘is there any hope. I have ceased to have even the power to believe, or the care to believe. God is only a name and immortality a dream. It was beautiful once to feel that they were true, and I look back with sorrowful wonder to the innocent days when I loved the old church, and could sing my hymns in unquestioning faith; but the doubts have gone too deep; my whole nature and character are changed by them; I can never get back the past. There is no dawn of divine light for me.’ ‘Nor for me either,’ cries another, who has lost himself in sin. ‘I know too much of life to think that I can redeem the deadly work I have done upon myself. I have been a slave, and now I have been too long a slave to be able to enjoy freedom. I cannot redeem the past, I cannot blot out the bygone years, and I must die, hating the sin I once loved, but linked to it for ever.’

In all these cases, the understanding says, It is impossible to pass out of the night. And it is partly right. No day can come swiftly to you, no complete

change will drive away the night. The full light of the Lord which will finally redeem you is far, far away. For, in strict analogy with the slowness of the growth of the earth and of mankind towards the final close, is the slowness of the growth of our human character; and when one of those shattering blows that ruin or spoil the heart has been given to life, it does not recover altogether for years and years. And as to faith and knowledge of God such as might remove your doubt, they do not come quickly. As rudimentary as is the knowledge and religion of the world is often the knowledge and religion of the heart. It will take a long, long time, and the darkness may have to become deeper, before you will see any light at all. And in the last case, the only way in which God will help you out of remorse or sin will be by awakening in you new powers and stimulating new virtues, and the powers and the virtues may take their rise out of the results of your sin. As there are vast tracts of the world yet uncivilised, so there are in each man large tracts of his nature which have not been brought into use, much less into cultivation or into fruit-bearing. It will be by God bringing life and vigour to these, in the tilling and rendering fruitful of these, that you will be redeemed from your sin. And the time to do that will be long. The judgment then is right which in you says that the day of the Lord, that day which will make you happy, or believing, or righteous again, is far away.

But, on the other hand, that which is true of all the world is true of you. The cry of hope which issues from your heart and asks for the dawning is answered,

not fully, but in part. A day does come, a little light invades the dreadful dark. A new interest, so slight that at first we do not recognise it, keeps the wounded life going; small, almost unmarked emotions of faith do not let the root of belief absolutely die, though every shred of its growth has disappeared above the ground; one day a burst of repentant tears tells you that you are capable of being saved, though it may take long to save you. And as years go on, these unexpected days of the Lord, these advents of Christ to your life, when the daylight comes to the night, increase in number and in the brightness of their rising. Year by year the skirts of the darkness contract, till at last the full and perfect day arrives, to which there shall be no night, for the Lord God is the sun of your heart and the Lamb is the light thereof.

Lastly, in the midst of all this change from night to day,—what are we to do? What, personally, is the first thing for us? Are we in the midst of this mighty stream of purpose to drift thoughtless down the tide of things, content, if God acts, to be ourselves inactive either for the progress of the world or for our own? That was not the Apostle's view. He knew that the inactive man would soon cease to believe in the action of God. It is only activity that can recognise activity, and to cease to believe in the action of God is spiritual death. So borne along by his faith in the coming day, he cried to men to make themselves ready for the coming of the Lord to themselves, to all mankind. The day is at hand, let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light.

That then is the Advent call God makes to you to-day. What your works of darkness are, each one of you knows in hours when the stir of the outward world is hushed and you go into the chambers within. The voice of God within you speaks their name. Resolve, in the secret strength which so marvellously comes when the prayer of passionate desire for righteousness has made you conscious of the power of God within you, to cast them off for ever. They hinder not only your advance, but the advance of all mankind. As no man liveth or dieth to himself, so no man sinneth to himself, or doeth good to himself. Therefore not only for your own sake, but for a larger and a more human reason, put the works of darkness by. They add to the night, they delay the dawn.

Then you will be fitted to wield and wear the armour of light. Stand therefore in this evil day, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; for he only who is sincere and true and just can withstand the spirit of falsehood and impurity in the world. Let your feet be shod with readiness to publish the gospel of peace, for your work is not only to contend with evil, but to bring glad tidings to the sinner and the sorrowful. Take the shield of faith, for the darts which most burn the soul and consume the will to do good work, are suspicions of God's love, and want of trust in the divine, in the Christ in man; and, in order that perseverance may be unfailing, let the hope of salvation be your helmet.

These are your defensive armour. For offence, receive the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God: not

the mere book of the Bible, as some say, but the living truth and light of God, the ideas of Christ, the inspired thoughts God has given to mankind in every age. Make these manifest: draw them like a sword, and let them flash before the eyes of men ; and their very light, without a blow, will burn up falsehood and fraud and superstition—these swords of the devil, the word of hell. Endue this armour for your warfare against the powers of the night, and keep it bright and fit for use by praying with all prayer, and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereto with all perseverance. So wait faithfully for the breaking of the morning, and welcome it with joy. For, nearer and clearer it shines. ‘The night is far spent ; the day is at hand.’

[June 15, 1873.]

*SOME WORDS ON PRAYER.*

Psalm iv.

THIS was an evening song, and it was most probably sung as eve began to fall, and David in his flight drew near to Mahanaim. That city lay among the hills of Moab ; and David, mounting from Jordan through the gloomy, tree-shadowed gorge by which Jabbok forces its way to join the greater river, found himself in sight of its walls on the evening of the second day of his flight from Absalom.

He had fled all night from Jerusalem, and halted on this side Jordan, opposite the ford Jabbok, waiting for news from Hushai. In the early morning, with hope, since he heard that Ahithophel's counsel had been rejected, he rose up cheered. 'I laid me down and slept ; I awaked ; for the Lord sustained me.' We follow him, then, as he crossed the river, and toiled upwards through the gorge to the table-land above ; and as evening fell, and he drew near his refuge, this Psalm burst from his lips—a psalm of passionate prayer, passing into passionate thanksgiving for unlooked-for safety. 'I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep : for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.'

All the day he continued to hear tidings from Jerusalem. His long train travelled slowly, and swift fugitives came up every hour bringing the latest news, news of the growth of the rebellion, of the turning of his glory into shame, of the vanity of the people, which had changed in a day from him to Absalom, of the leasing, the lying slanders of his enemies—bitter tidings!

But the greater the evil and the bitterer the tale (and how bitter they were, none but those who have felt a loved son's ingratitude can tell) the stronger is David's unconquerable belief in God's presence and God's help. It was the victorious element in his life. This man could not be beaten, never could despair; no matter how dark the hour, he saw the light; no matter how intense the sorrow, he trusted in joy. There never was a greater believer in the resurrection of life, and therefore there never was a greater soul. And the root of this, according to David's own showing, was unshakeable faith in God, and in God's direct care and interest in his life. It is David's great lesson to us: it is the foremost religious result of his life upon mankind.

It may be that something of this swift dismissal of the paralysing results of misfortune and sorrow was due to that poetic nature of his, which at once threw strong emotion of any kind into words, and so freed the heart from half its weight. In all his Psalms we detect the lyric rush of feeling, the cry, as it were, in the first verse, with which irrepressible emotion leaped in a moment into voice. We can fancy him walking silently along the gorge, thoughts and feelings surging,

increasing in volume of emotion within him, till at last, as he came out of the gloomy pass, and saw from the bright grassy downs, dotted with forest groups, and golden in the lights of the red evening, the sun set in the pure sky, his heart swelled with the beauty of the world and rejoiced in the clear air, and out broke the song: ‘Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness ! Thou hast enlarged me in distress, be gracious to me and hear my prayer.’

It is a wild cry to God. For David was in sore trouble, and out of trouble comes prayer. It is very well in easy life, with small sorrows, and the pain only that fancy makes, when the sky of existence is blue and bright, not to pray. Then the countenance of friends, the coming of fair weather, some new amusement or interest are sufficient to restore the heart—God is not thought of; but, when the hurricane comes, when treachery and desertion, as in David’s case, threaten to corrupt the springs of life, when one falls into an abyss of sorrow and self-torment, then the soul cannot get on alone. The depths of being are stirred, and out of the depths we cry unto Thee, O God ! It is no product of reasoning, of the weighing for and against of the possibility of prayer : but, spontaneous, swift as lightning, over-riding all the logic of the understanding, the heart assumes in a moment a living Being of love and care, and cries, ‘Come to me, my God, I need thee now.’ And He comes, the Infinite Love, undeterred by our long neglect, touched by no false human jealousy of His honour, smiling at our petulance, pitying our pain, with all the happy readiness of endless tenderness :

do the best for us, to make us feel that, though we did not see Him, He has been with us all our life.

Everywhere, in the history of the human heart, these two things are found, in the hours of our bitter pain: unfathomable desire and want of something more than earth or its love can give; and the consciousness of some One capable of filling the want. Nor are these things found only in pain: but, as if pain and pleasure were two sides of the same thing, in the supremest joy also. They are found—this unfathomable desire, this far-off sense of one who can fill it—when inspiration reaches its last earthly height of attainment, when poetry comes as natural expression and yet cannot express all it needs; when the artist is swept away by his ideal, and is in rapture with it, even though he cannot realise it: when the lover of truth is wordless, and can only die to express his love: when in vague longings that do not know their own source, the soul is miserable, and life uncontrollable weariness. Who has not also felt this cry in the wail of music? Nay, Nature herself, speaking the voice of our heart, seems to echo it. We think we hear it in the sighing of the stream and in the whisper on the moor. It comes to us out of the endlessness of the midnight sky that seems to be burdened with its own infinity, weary of finding no limit to itself. Philosophise as we will, we are driven by these unspeakable wants, by this eternal yearning, to create an answer to it, and we call that answer—God.

Of course I cannot, you cannot, prove God; but if this does not mean God, the infinite fulness of life—what

does it mean? what answer does the atheist give to it? what is the use of the scientific explanations of the cause of this cry, if the cry be there unsatisfied? It does not cure my hunger to give me the reasons of it; it is only food will satisfy me. And if this want has no practical satisfaction, if there is no infinite plenitude to fill my infinite want, if the travail of man ends in no new birth, if feeling myself a son I have no Father, and sinful and I have no righteousness, and capable of eternity and there is only annihilation for me —then I had rather be a dog than a man.

Out of ~~these two things~~, consciousness of an infinite want and an infinite fulness, and of the relation of one to the other, springs prayer, the paradox: and whatever some may say, it is undeniable that men, and these not the worst, but the best of the race, have received—or, if you like, imagined they received—an answer. Their want has been filled; their pain changed into power; their inward disease healed; their cry of hopeless aspiration altered into a cry of infinite and conquering hope; their view of nature so changed, that it brings them calm instead of reflecting their own pain; their weakness made strong; their hour of death met, not with rigid stoicism but with bright emotion of gratitude; and their whole life, it may be of humblest duty, or of lingering pain, made one career of triumph and of resignation that ennobles others as they look upon it. It is things like these which these men have themselves —and they are not bad judges—confessed to be the results of prayer to God felt and claimed as their Father

and Friend, that go far to convince men of the reality and force of prayer.

The first knowledge of its power comes, as I have said, in the solemn and awful hours of life, at least to those who have not served God from their youth, and even these find in it then a new power. And then the great characteristic of it is impetuosity, such as marks the outcry of David. ‘Hear me, when I call.’ For a kind of violence marks earnestness. As there is cruelty sometimes in love, when it has grasped the whole nature almost to strangling, so there is often a harsh neglect of reverence when one feels that one must have God with us or die. Our passion lifts us above ordinary forms ; we claim a kind of equality with the Highest ; a right of kindred, as it were, which throws aside respect, in agony of desire. ‘I will not let thee go unless thou bless me,’ answers Jacob. When Moses, agonised with failure, stands before God, listen how he speaks : ‘Lord, wherefore hast Thou so evil entreated this people ; why is it Thou hast sent me ? For since I came to Pharaoh, to speak in Thy name, he hath done evil to this people, neither hast Thou delivered Thy people at all.’ When Jeremiah, cast into his dungeon, heard on all sides the mocking of the world, his misery broke out in impatient reproach : ‘O Lord, Thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived ; Thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed. I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me. Then I said I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name.’ When Habbakuk looked round him and saw only evil, and felt that it was God’s righteousness in him which

made him bitterly conscious of evil, and yet saw that there was nothing that seemed to be done to set things right, his was no quiet patient utterance :— ‘ O Lord, how long shall I cry and Thou wilt not hear, even cry out to Thee of violence and Thou wilt not save ? Why dost Thou show me iniquity and cause me to behold grievance ? ’ When the nobleman met Christ and asked for the life of his son, and Christ answered with some questions about faith, the awful grief in the man’s heart broke through all the questions rudely, and came with violence to the point : ‘ Sir, come down ere my child die.’

Yes, she who has hung over a dying husband ; he who has felt that the love of years is crumbling away from him hour by hour ; he who has come to some crisis of religious thought, and in the heavy rain and wind sees only one pale streak of light, how does he pray ? Not in set words, often only in the repetition of one cry : ‘ Hear me, hear me when I call ; ’ often only in a voiceless passion in the heart, ‘ with groanings that cannot be uttered ; ’ or if expression come, with harsh, rude, rugged words, with indignant faith in God.

This is prayer in these times, this is the way the soul then claims God as its Father, sweeping back from the far country, where God has been forgotten, to His gracious presence. And God does not mind the roughness of the weak human feeling, just because He sees beneath the surface the growing faith, and knows that at a touch He can transform it into love. He wishes to be laid siege to, and, as it were, forced to capitulate, and I may be allowed the expression when I recall the

words of Christ: ‘The kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force.’

T Half-hearted, lazy prayer has no force in it, cannot climb to Heaven’s gate. That which has no will, no passion at its root, dies faintly on the lips. And so the Greek as well as the Christian knew. When one of the Homeric heroes called out of his misfortune upon his god, ‘Out of his heart he poured a mighty cry,’ is the way the poet puts it. And when, in Southey’s Hindoo poem, the Glendoveer cleft the sky to Seeva’s feet, the strong power that nerved his wing to reach the utmost bound of the remotest sphere, where Seeva lives as light,

Was all-surmounting will,  
Intensity of faith and holiest love ;  
And as he prayed, intenser faith he felt,  
His spirits seemed to melt  
With ardent yearnings of increasing love ;  
‘Let me not Seeva seek in vain !’

L These things, passion, faith, and will, are the wings of prayer, as they are the wings of all the words and deeds which bring forth fruit on earth. Without them, our prayers are like his who knelt at the altar with his brother’s death upon his soul—

My words fly up, my thoughts remain below !  
Words without thoughts never to Heaven go.

Be therefore in earnest with God; be importunate; let no silence, no apparent cruelty send you back. Though He answer you never a word, though when He answer He answer roughly, ‘It is not meet to

take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs,' do not let Him go. And though there be delay, the final answer will be this: 'O woman, great is thy faith ! be it unto thee even as thou wilt.'

But sometimes neither faith, passion nor will arise and we cannot pray at all.

The heart gets often hard in bitter sorrow: neither words nor thoughts will come. God Himself is seen as the injurer, and then it is indeed miserable; for there is no outward consolation possible that is not shrunk from as intrusion; and without God, there is no silent inner comfort. Deprived of all, we are thrown back on ourselves, a dreadful companion, and nothing is heard but the deafening clang of the reiterated knell of sorrow. I suppose there is nothing for that but time and human love; time to slowly make the wound less sore with its soothing hand, human love to lead one to believe in the love of God again. One thing, however, we can do—we can compel ourselves to take interest in others; we can force ourselves away from our sorrow to relieve the sorrow of others. By and by, though we cannot pray for ourselves, we may try to pray for others whom we love, and then, having gained something of the custom of prayer, we shall be surprised one day into praying for ourselves, and find our God again.

At other times, however, it is not this that makes prayer impossible. It is a deep depression, the essential difference of which is that it seems without cause. It is a nameless anger against nothing, a sense of life being too hard for us, for which we despise ourselves, but which we cannot get rid of; a feeling that there

has been nothing but failure, even though we know we have had all the success we deserve. In these hours of despondence, in which we hate ourselves, but which seem wholly out of our power to conquer, prayer seems impossible. Why is this? we ask.

The reasons are different for different persons. Sometimes we are of that temperament in which everything at certain intervals seems phantasmal. The outward world loses all reality. We are forced to touch things to prove their existence, and even that does not prove it; we seem to look beyond, behind everything, into a vast empty space, in which we are alone: our own life seems less than a dream, and we ourselves its shadow; all our past we know, but we seem to know it as belonging to another person, and it fades away into an infinite distance; our work has no reality; our friends, those we most dearly love, children, wife, and brothers, have no relations to us, and though we speak to them, we cannot conceive why we love them or what we have to do with them, except as a ghost with ghosts; all their connection with us dies into a flittering dream, for which we care as we care for a picture which we glance at and forget. Days, weeks, and years which friendship and love filled with memories and associations, which we thought would stir the blood even in the chill of age, do not warm a single fibre of the heart; nay, when they recur, they are weariness inexpressible; we feel to them as Ulysses felt to the ghosts that crowded, a thin, wailing multitude around the trench of sacrifice, and we force them away. We cannot bear to be haunted by phantoms;

they make our phantom mood too real to ourselves. It is only silence that we want, for in that at least we are less conscious of the cruel fate that has wrought us and all things into the stuff that dreams are made of. And yet all the time, we know that the whole thing is absurd, and are ready to smile at it. The reasoning power is clear, but for all that, it has no practical influence, it cannot overcome the dream.

Now when that comes, God becomes as much a phantom as the rest. We do not believe in Him any more than in ourselves; and it is only with a vague remnant of self-consciousness that we are sorry for ourselves, sorry to find ourselves so alone, yet so restless, winging our way like a bird through an infinite void, forced to fly onwards for ever; but however far we fly, always at the centre of an eternity; ready to give worlds for some island star on which to rest our foot for a moment, but never finding it; no human voice to reach us, no God, no home. How is one to pray then? There is nothing to pray to, for the very essence of the condition is, that there is no centre, no source of things, no end and no beginning conceivable.

It is not so uncommon as you may think, and it has its astonished pain. Perhaps physical exertion might remedy it; but if we are fixed down and cannot get it! Work is of little use; and when we force ourselves to it, we either do it badly, or, as is often the case, no thought is possible; nothing will come. And even if we succeed in compelling labour, this condition underlies it; and the moment we cease, we are away again in our land of shadows, where life and love and morality and God are

all alike unreal. There is no prayer possible then. We must wait till common sense returns, till the sense of life begins to move again; and if we are healthy of heart, we desire and long for that, and it is sure to come. But if we like and encourage these states, as is sometimes the case, and cherish this dreamland, we get wretchedly wrong, and God has a sharp way of dealing with it. He clears the air of all our unreal fancies, by giving us something real to deal with. Is this a shadow, this a phantom? He asks; and He sends home to our heart one of those bitter blows which convince us of reality by making every nerve quiver, and the heart reel. 'Know now,' He cries, 'what I am, what you are; know that we have doings one with another, that you must take up duty, that you must act and not dream in life.' And we are forced into activity, and into prayer. For we waken with such a shock that we cry on our God.

Sometimes, however, it is not this vague depression that hinders prayer, but the seeming failure of life. We have actually failed for the time in our life or work. All has gone wrong.

Two thoughts then arise, and both hinder prayer at the very moment when we want it most. The first is that we are injured by God. We have given up our whole life, our best energy and thought to this thing, and God has taken away our hope from us. It is unjust, we say, and when conscience says, What of that fault linked to your efforts? we are bold enough to say, 'Why did God permit it; why did He not save me from it?' As long as that sense of injustice done to us by God lasts—and it often lasts long, since we excuse ourselves

by it—there is no chance of prayer. We cannot pray to one whom we consider unjust.

Again, we think (supposing that there has been no consciousness of error, and yet we have failed) that God has made all things for nought. ‘I have done my best,’ we say; ‘it has been no good; my whole life is wrecked; what I did was true, and pure, and just, and I gave up everything for it, and now it has sunk in the ocean, and not a foambell on the surface marks where my ship once rode so statelyly. God has made all things for vanity.’

We cannot encourage that thought, and grow to believe it, without going further. We think that God Himself is vanity. His truth, His love, His justice, cease to be more than empty names, and He becomes a mere name Himself before long. Then also prayer becomes impossible.

I cannot, however, but think that we arrive at that stage when hardness of heart or failure comes, because before they came we had made God a stranger by neglecting prayer. We dropt at some time or another our childish habit of kneeling down and speaking to Him; and gradually omitting the form, the spirit of the thing grew cold, and we ceased even to think of His presence with us as the guard and guide of life. Owing to that, we fell into the fault which rifted the lute of our effort and which spoilt it. Owing to that, our work wanted that religious note, that spirit of life, which (if it had been there) would have enabled us to trust Him even in failure, and to spring out of it into renewed action with a clearer view of our object. And now having

neglected communion with Him, never referring our action to Him, we cannot recover prayer. When the time comes that prayer would be of avail to win for us strength, comfort, and resolution, in the feeling that we possess as ours a personal Friend who is for us Almighty power and love, we do not know the way to Him, nor do we realise Him as He is. We mistake Him, for we are ignorant; we are afraid of Him, instead of loving Him; we think He will take vengeance, we dread His anger; we imagine Him as jealous of the past; we see only wrath in His punishment; we bestow on Him all our human littleness, and of course we cannot—nay, we will not pray.

These are some of the more uncommon phases of the life of the heart which occur in hours of great trial, or in hours which from the dominance of fancy seem equivalent to trial; and the general cause of their power over us is, that we have neglected to keep God by our side, forgotten or been driven far from Him.

And, now, what lesson about these two things does this song of David's teach? With all his sins, David had not forgotten the Ever Near. He had not, except for one wretched year, when he was enthralled with passion, and bitterly repented, left off that prayer which makes a man always conscious of God by his side.

This is the great lesson of this Psalm. He had met awful misfortune; no more terrible blow could have fallen on a man. His dearest son had turned against him. The sting which drove poor Lear out into the storm was in his heart. 'Sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child.' Also, all seemed failure:

his glory was turned to shame ; the kingdom he had built up out of the dust wrenched from his hand by a forgetful people ; and in his place in Zion, men who loved vanity and sought after lies ; deceivers and deceived. If anyone might have doubted of God, it was he ; if anyone might have said, ‘ There is injustice in his rule, all is evil, all the promises I trusted in are nought,’ it was David.

And yet, how do we find him ? The sole cheerful, hopeful, vigorous-hearted man among all the fugitives. All around him were more or less despairing. ‘ What possible good is there in this,’ they cried ; ‘ where shall we find a spark of hope ? ’ ‘ There be many that say,’ says David, ‘ who will show us any good ? ’ And the great king and greater man replies, feeling the presence of Jehovah with him, ‘ Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us.’ Is not that magnificent ? What great self-confidence, yet what humility ! That is the true temper of prayer, a proud humility. Mark how it is given in the words, ‘ God of my right, have mercy on me ! ’

He appeals with proud confidence to the righteous God to avenge his cause ; not with pride that had its root in self, but in knowledge of God’s righteousness. He had sinned, and he felt that this overthrow and flight were part of his punishment. But God, David also felt (and how victorious over life such a feeling makes a man !) was not a whit less near, less loving to him, because He punished, but nearer and more loving. And, though he was driven out of his kingdom, and that was God’s punishment, yet that did not make the wrong done to

him by the rebels less wrong. Though punished by God, yet David cried, ‘ My cause is now a just one ; and for the very reason that God was against me for my sin, He must now be on my side, for I am right. God of my right, therefore, hear my prayer.’ This was his proud and noble trust in God as eternal righteousness, and in God as bound by His nature to support the right. It is not pride of self; it is pride in God—say, rather, lofty trust.

But in a moment, lest the heart should be too bold, he unconsciously supplements the cry of confidence by the cry of humility. ‘ Have mercy upon me.’ This is the true amalgam of prayer ; trust which boldly claims God, humility that owns the weakness of self. Yes, to feel that we are all things in God, that in Him we are ennobled creatures, children of the loftiest destiny, master of all things in His strength, of the world, of fate, of our own unquiet hearts, of failure, of depression, of the tempests of trial, full of a high carelessness of what man can do unto us, when the light of His countenance is lifted on us, and yet that we are nothing in ourselves—that is the essence of the prayerful spirit, ‘ God of my righteousness, have mercy upon me.’

And the answer comes at once to such a prayer, as it came to David, not as yet in restoration to the kingdom, but in that which made restoration or not indifferent—in gladness of heart, in peace of heart.

‘ Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn, and wine, and oil increased.

‘ I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for it is Thou, Lord, only that makest me dwell in safety.’

It may be our answer if we pray; and, O, what dearer blessings can we have on earth than simple gladness, and to hear His voice in our hearts, 'Thou hast had much trouble, my child, and a stormy time. Lie down now in peace and sleep, and I will watch for thy security.'

[June 13, 1879.]

*CHRIST'S ELECTION OF DISCIPLES.*

'And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.'—MARK i. 17.

THIS is the first vivid record we have of the outdoor preaching of Christ. The little fishing village near which the words of the text were spoken hid itself among cornfields and oleanders and olive and vine upon the shore, which, white with sand and feathered with foliage, heard the low wave break among the dark boats drawn up upon its shallow slope. Through the cornfields, among the trees, but chiefly on the shore among the busy men, moved the bright figure of Jesus, the Saviour of the world, the preacher of a Father's kingdom; and all the smiling scenery was in tune with the hopes and faith and prophecies of His soul. He looked within his own heart and was happy, feeling Himself full of God. He looked around Him and was happy, feeling that the world was full of God; and had He been a poet only, or a pietist, He might have been content. But He did not come into this world only to feel, but to embody what He felt, in order that others might feel it and be kindled by it. He did not come only to muse on the truths he felt and to enjoy

them alone; but to root them in men's hearts by preaching them in words and living them in acts. And though His enjoyment of the beauty of the world was great, it was in the Truth He possessed that His joy was greatest, because that was something He could give to men, and He knew that it would make them free and loving, pure and blessed.

It was no wonder He wished to make others share in His good news. For the nature of joy is to share itself and our joy is doubled in value when its musick is echoed by another, when its lightning lightens on another's face. From east to west, then, over the whole world, Christ wished his good news to work its work among the nations. Therefore He sought for followers whom He should teach, that they might teach in turn.

Whom did He choose? Was it the wise and learned? They would have tormented the simplicity of His teaching with endless commentaries, and wrought it into intellectual schemes, so that the shepherd on the hill and the slave in the city could not have understood it. Too well we know what the wisdom of the world in the brains of the priesthood has made of the words of Christ. If the work of theologians had been done at the beginning of Christianity, we should have had no simple Christianity at all.

Then, did He choose the rich, and those in high position? No, truly, that would not have been wise. For they would have weighted His goodness with the cares and deceitfulness of wealth, with the ambition and meanness of society. And what could rich men

have done with a doctrine which bade them give away wealth, which told the business man to take no thought for the morrow, which said to the courtier, 'There is only one King, and He is in heaven,' which told the man in society, 'There is only one nobility, and the slave who carries your litter may have it as well as you?'

Did He choose the religious leaders? How could He? They would dissolve His charity, His mercy, and His tolerance, in the acid of their theological hatreds. They would cast His religion into a fixed form which would destroy its variety and flexibility, so that it could not enter into the characters of diverse nations and become the universal gospel; they would subject it to their own ecclesiastical interests, and it would cease to be the interest of mankind.

Did he choose the politicians—those among the Jews who conspired against the Romans, or those who held to the Romans? Why should He? That would have made His Gospel a gospel for the Jews only, and not for Greek and Roman and barbarian. To choose the politicians would have been to propagate His truth by political craft or by the sword. It was not the way of Christ to set up the kingdom of God by the worship of the devil.

None of these He made His messengers. He chose the unlearned and the poor and the outcast of the theologians, and the uninterested in politics, and the men and women of whom society knew nothing; the fisherman and the publican, the Pharisee who left the priestly ranks, the rich who left their riches, the Israelite

without guile, the cottager, the sinner and the harlot who were contrite, but chiefly—for with these in his favourite haunts He most companioned—the fishermen of the lake of Galilee.

‘Come, He said, I will make you fishers of men. And they left all and followed Him.’ He was not wrong, then, in His choice. These men, who gave up all at once for Him, had impulse, heart, impetuosity, and love. These were the first elements He wanted in the character of His followers, the main things needed for their work. It was a hard task He set them to fulfil, and no faint-heartedness or questioning could bear its trials. They were to be ready for persecution, and it needed to count all things but loss to bear that painful life. They were to oppose the whole force of the Jewish priesthood supported by centuries of engrained tradition, the whole force of Roman heathenism and scepticism and luxury, and the whole force of the old philosophies, which, alike in their decay and in their new forms, were strong—and to fight that battle needed the enthusiasm the world calls madness. It is true, the impulse which carried them against these powers was an ignorant one. But that was rather a good than an evil. Had they realised the extent of the forces they opposed, they might have despaired. We hear in Gamaliel’s scorn the opinion of a cultivated man upon their enterprise. But, even had they realised it, I doubt if they would have given way. At least St. Paul, who knew his world, did not. The Gospel was to him the power of God to Greek, barbarian, and Jew. And John, and Peter, and James, the fishermen,

were not behind him when they did stand before coun-cils and kings. They had—and it was their chief quality—the heart to venture greatly, the love to give up all, the faith which removed mountains. Not in their diction was the word impossible.

It was the intensity of spirit that Christ stirred in His followers. He had the prophet's power of kindling passion, of awaking a youth in those who loved Him. When He spoke, men arose from the dead! And, of course, they did great things. All their powers put forth leaves and blossoms and flowers. Those who saw and heard men who had come under the influence of Christ, wondered, as one who has seen a wood in winter wonders when he sees the same wood in spring. They took notice of them, it is said, that they had been with Jesus. The mocking crowd thought it was new wine, but it was the new wine of a new life. It made men a new creation in Christ Jesus.

If we ask the source of this, it was no doubt partly personal. No one who reads the Gospels but recognises the unique power of Christ's personality. It lay partly in the weight of goodness, partly in the sweetness and force of His humanity, partly in the wonderful grace and charm which drew men to love Him, and which shone in His face, breathed in His words, illuminated the way in which He acted.

But had that been all, His work would not have been done—the life He made in men would scarcely have lasted beyond His death. With the passing of the person would have passed the power. No; the main thing was this, that the personal influence was

weighted with infinite, divine, ideal thoughts ; was used to establish living truths in the hearts of men, living, because they created and supported a life. That was His real power. 'Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.' That was the sort of thought He gave them. It was infinite—it was to extend over the whole of the human race. They were to be fishers, not of one nation, but of all mankind. Yet, unlimited as the thought was, it was quite simple. It meant that they were to save men by telling them one simple truth, that God loved them, and wanted to save them from sin. And infinite and simple, the thought was also impassioned. It came home to the two deepest feelings of the human heart—love of man and love of God. It made the work of their lives the saving and blessing of men. It linked that work to God, whose will it declared to be that men should be redeemed. Imagine the deep emotion with which this filled the heart—'Love one another, love the whole world as I have loved you.' Think, too, of the deep emotion this stirred—'Love God, for He is love to man. Save men, for they are the children of God the Father ; save them, because being all children of God, they and you are brothers one of another.' Infinite, simple and passionate ; these thoughts thrilled the apostles through and through.

Of course all this was not understood at first, when at the trumpet sound of the words in their hearts they left all to follow Christ. But enough was understood to set their souls on fire. They had entered on the skirts of an infinite landscape, and they felt (though they could not see), that it extended far beyond their furthest

thought. With that feeling of the illimitable came a wonderful joy and exultation. Their souls expanded. As life went on, and they saw more of the meaning of the thought, it grew before them, and with its growth they grew; till at last they realised that they were abiding in the infinite; that they lived in, and worked out, in common life, one of the thoughts of the immeasurable mind of God. Do you wonder that these men believed in immortal life? They could not doubt it, for they were dwelling in it. Their thoughts, hopes, joys, lives, and works were illimitable. With natural, with profound surprise, cried one of them, 'How say some among you, that there is no resurrection of the dead?'

So exalted, so inspired, they went forth into the world. Fishers of men! surely they were that. They saw before them a vast ocean, in whose depths were men and women and children dead in sin, lost in ignorance, superstition, and misery. In a few small barks they launched forth into the deep and let down their nets for a draught: they rescued Jew, Greek, Roman, barbarian, king, priest, courtier, workman, slave, all nations, kindreds, tongues, and classes. They honoured none above another, they selected no caste; they made no inequality. For the first time they lifted women to the level of men, and made them fellow-workers in the cause of man, fellow children of God. For the first time children became the care of a church, and were watched and followed from the cradle till they could speak for themselves. For the first time the old were sought as members of a great body with as much

eagerness as the young. The whole of humanity was embraced in the search. And a great happiness and joy filled the rescued souls. The old man knew that he was young for ever in eternal purity. The slave felt that he was free, though the chain was on his wrist; the poor rejoiced in the riches which this world could not give or take. The suffering looked to God, and lost their pain in love. The sinner gazed on Christ, and felt that God had forgiven him, and, forgetting his sin, rushed rejoicing into a new life; the superstitious lost the fear and ignorance of the gods that had made his life cruel and wretched, and knew and loved a Father. And each and all, loving and rejoicing, were drawn to one another, and felt the blessedness of human communion, gave up their wealth and time and labour that others might be helped, and made happier, and saved. And the more communion they had with each other, the more they burned to increase the number of those who possessed this blessedness, and each man and woman became in turn a fisher of men; saving, loving, and teaching the lost in the manner of the Saviour. That was their work as fishers of men.

And that is your work. Are you doing it with all your heart? Is it your first thought? Does it possess your soul with passion? Is it your greatest and divinest joy to save and rescue men for God to a life of love, purity, sacrifice, progress, and immortality? *My* work! you say, How can that be? I am not an apostle, not a preacher, not authorised; and I have my own work in the world to do. Not a preacher! If you know God

and love Him, how can you help telling men about Him ; how can you help saving men whom you see lost, suffering, and sinful ? Not authorised ! The apostles were not set apart as a special class, nor do their so-called descendants form one. Ministers are set apart, not to be a class, but as representatives of that which all men should be. They are specially called to be fishers of men in order that they may teach all who hear them to be fishers of men. You *know* that is true when you think about it, when you begin to care for doing the thing itself. The moment a man asks himself what he can do in this way, he finds the work ready to his hand, close beside him. The moment you have the heart to do it, do you mean to say that you can help doing it ? Not save, help, console, uplift, teach the sinful, the weak, the pained, the broken-hearted, the ignorant ; not rush into this work with joy ?—oh, you cannot help being a fisher of men, and you ask no authority for that divine toil. It is human work, and it makes you a man to do it. It is divine work, and it makes you one with God to do it.

As to your business in the world, it does not interfere with that except to modify its selfishness. This Divine work is found by you in the midst of your business, found in every relation which you have with men, and women, and children. The man of business finds it among those he employs, the working man among his fellow workmen, the doctor, the lawyer, among their clients. Why, there is not a man who has not his opportunities to do this saving, comforting, ennobling work, or some part of it, every week of his life, in the very midst

of his work--unless the one thing he thinks of be making money or a position, or of his own family, or of himself. Then he does *not* see his way to do this work, and he does not do it. And he reaps his reward: an inhuman life makes a hard heart—an unloved life a lonely death; isolation from man makes isolation from God. Yes, be a fisher of men—not by neglecting your daily work, but in it, and through its opportunities. The very essence of this Divine labour is that it should be done as Christ did it—in the street and in the mart, in the corn-field and the fishing-boat, where men sit at the receipt of custom, and where they sit on the grass of the hill side—in work-time and holiday—everywhere and in every time.

For it is the one foremost duty and the one transcendent blessing of life, to seek and save the lost, the suffering, and the ignorant; to bring to them goodness for guilt, and love for fear, and faith for despair, and life of self-sacrifice for the death of self-will, and a sound mind for superstition, and God and His love for the lonely devilishness in their own hearts. And when we do this, it becomes the master thought of life. And, as the master thought, it exalts our common life, for it brings a Divine work into the midst of our worldly work, and fills the work called worldly with God and His love, till there is nothing profane. The airs of heaven breathe through our daily labour. All is sacred, for in all that we are doing, we do Christ's work of rescuing men.

And since the work itself spreads beyond this world, and is done on eternal souls and for the eternal God—

the thought of it which fills our inner life, is an infinite thought ; and always to think an infinite thought and to feel its emotions is to possess that intensity of life which of all things in the world we want and desire most. It gives joy to being, and then all work is done well—for joy in work is the first necessity for excellence. It will give you the heart for great sacrifices, and make them easy ; it will give you the prophet's power over men, and you will move them by the power of the infinite thought that lives in you and breathes through you. And you yourself, companying always with eternal thoughts, seeing the whole world saved in God, watching that eternal work going on, and rejoicing in it, and doing work which will never die in the hearts of men, will feel and know your immortality, so that when men say to you 'Perhaps you are immortal,' you will turn and reply with grave surprise, 'Perhaps ! I *am* now immortal.'

[July 1879.]

*GOD IN CHRIST.*

‘Ye believe in God; believe also in Me.’—ST. JOHN xiv. 1.

THE words I have read are Christ’s own statement that He had added other ideas to the already existing ideas of religion; that He had revealed, that is, brought to light, thoughts on the relation between God and man, and on the essential nature of both, which were unknown before. ‘Ye believe in God’—already that belief is yours—‘believe also in Me,’—add to your former belief the things I have told you and lived before you. They will complete your idea of God, they will fulfil and expand, not only your idea of God, but those spiritual feelings, and the life flowing from them, which constitute religion. For Christ did not mean when He spoke this text, to make belief in Him a different thing from belief in the Father, nor to separate Himself from God, as a distinct object of faith. If there is one thing He insists on in His teaching, it is that He is nothing in Himself; that He can do nothing by Himself, that all His words and works are not His own, but His Father’s. Therefore, when He says, ‘Believe also in Me,’ it means, believe not only in the revelation of God in the Old Testament, but also in the revelation God has given of Himself through Me. The phrase, then, leads us to

ask two things—What is belief in God without Christ ?—What has Christ added to our knowledge of God ?

I. What do we mean, then, apart from the Christian revelation, when we say we believe in God ? We mean that we believe in infinite Thought, infinite Intelligence, and that all things of which we are conscious, and especially all thought, are derived from this Omnipresent Thought—nay, are parts of it. Everything that has been, and is, and will be, is God's thought. When He thinks a thing, it is. When we see, hear, or understand a thing, we are thinking it along with God. The whole universe, from the smallest grain of dust to the vastest star and stars, the infinite past of matter, as we call it, *is* because God has thought it—because He thinks it now. We believe, then, in absolute, eternal, infinite intelligence, exercising itself in the incessant movement of thought, when we believe in God.

The same thing may be said with regard to life. When we believe in God we believe in infinite Life. That which thinks, lives ; that which is a part of thought, lives ; and when we say that the whole universe is thought, we say that the whole universe has life, and that both are of God. All notions of dead matter, lifeless laws, all notions of that which we call death being the end of things, all notion of annihilation, cannot be kept as ideas within the sphere of this belief. Matter is not unintelligible atoms vibrating to and fro, it is a living stream of intelligent energy. Laws are not abstractions—they are ideas.—Death is a part of the movement of life ; annihilation is inconceivable. There is nothing in us, around us, or beyond our ken

which is not life, which has not the infinite movement and force of life. To believe in that is to believe in God.

But if that is all we believe we are only Pantheists. We mean much more; we believe in God as not only infinite Thought and Life, but as infinite goodness. He is a moral Being; He is absolute Holiness, Truth, Justice, and Beauty; and wherever these things are, in matters of the spirit or the intellect, they are there by Him and through Him. Wherever His thought and life are, there also, co-extensive with them, is His moral character, and that moral character is by its very essence everlasting and unchangeable. This secures the order, the consistency, the certainty of that which we call Nature. This secures the order, consistency, and certainty of intellectual truth. This secures the certainty of reward and punishment, the unwavering standard of moral right and wrong outside of us, the absolute Imperative of which we are conscious. When we say, then, we believe in God, we mean that we believe, in spite of all that seems here contrary to them, in an absolute right, an absolute truth, an absolute order and an absolute beauty. These things are, and are unchangeable and eternal.

But where thought and life and moral character are, we have also a will, and where there is a will with these things, we have that which we call personality. We believe in God and conceive Him then as personal, though we know not of what sort His personality is. The will of God is necessarily ruled by holiness, justice, truth, and love, and moves as a force through the

infinite thought, and the infinite life, making all the forms of that thought and life work towards the ends which holiness, and love, and justice, and truth desire. Hence there springs up the idea of God as the moral Governor of the world and our personal King; and in God as such we believe.

These are then the four great ideas of which our one idea of God is made. And, of course, as these—in one Being—comprehend the whole universe of thought and life, and will, and their moral ground, God is one. There is not, and cannot be anything but He.

But as we think these things, how vast the distance deepens between God and us! We have thought, and life, and will, and moral character, but they seem but atoms in this infinite of God. And we know their imperfection. We think but only a little way, and then a barrier rises. We will, but circumstances break down our will; we will to do right, but the passions in us conquer our will; we live, but decay undoes our life, and death seems to disperse it. We aspire to righteousness, we pursue truth, but our spirit only reaches a little righteousness, and our intellect only grasps the skirts of truth. There seems to be an immeasurable gulf between us and God. And yet how infinitely, how ceaselessly thought, and life, and will, and moral character in us thirst for union, for intimate and undying union, with perfect thought, and perfect life, and perfect goodness, and completed personality—for God in whom we conceive these things to be perfect. My soul is athirst for God—that is the long unutterable cry of mankind, in all times, in all religions.

And more than this, we want not only union with the perfection of these things, but union with the Being who possesses them, and union in the only way in which we seem to care to have it—in the way of love. We want this mighty Will to be filled with love to us, this vast Thought to think of us with love, this infinite Life to live in us by love, this absolute Holiness to delight in us with love. We cannot get rid of this desire. It is deep in us as infinity. ‘God, if Thou art God, if I am Thy creature, love me, for I long to love Thee, and I cannot, till I know that Thou lovest me.’ Out of all the old religions that passionate outburst springs; in all speculations, in all myths, in all theologies, in all the sacred books of the world, its cry is heard; deepest, longest, most intense in the Jewish books. The world waited for One who should add to the elements of its belief in God this one other—this cardinal element—this belief in a God who could love man and who desired the love of man. It was that which Christ gave to us. The desire of it had been expressed before. He declared the truth which answered the desire. And because He did that, He said, ‘Ye believe in God, believe also in Me.’ For what did He declare? First, that God and man were one. He declared that God was not far away from man, but had entered into man, and become at one with him—I and My Father are one—and that God had done this, not for Him alone, but for all men; that all humanity was filled and possessed by God; that what He Himself, Christ, was, all men were also to be; that all men might be one with the Father, even as the

Father was one with Him. Therefore we believe, through Christ, in a God no longer at an infinite distance from us. We believe in a God who is ours; not only akin to us, but at one with us; not only in a God without us, but in a God within us. The infinite One abides in us, folds us into undying union with Himself, is incarnate in us all. And all our lives and thoughts and acts and powers and faculties of imagination and intellect become, when we believe this, and by the power of that belief, not only human, but Divine; glorious because god-like, eternal, blessed, infinite, because they are at one with God. All humanity is lifted through Christ's revelation into union with Divinity. Fancy the power of that on life. It does not only exalt it, regenerate it, set it on fire—it makes it completely beautiful. And above all, it fills it with unspeakable love. It binds God and man together like husband and wife, like two beings who, loving one another with perfect sympathy, dwell in one another, and are not two, but one being. That is the faith of the Christian concerning God and man.

But what this relation of love is between God and us, is more clearly defined by Christ. For Christ made one word which had been used about God before His time, but which He animated with new life, the central word of His revelation about God. He called God our Father, and made Fatherhood on His side, and childhood on ours, the terms that expressed our relation of love to God and His relation of love to us. *We were children of God.* All the love, pity, tenderness, joy, interest, pleasure, yearning, hope, resolution, intensity,

a mother and father on earth feel towards their infant, their child, their young man and woman going out into the world, Christ told us God felt to us--and as much more of all these things as God was more perfect than we, and able to feel them more fully. All the care, watchfulness, provision for the future, in sickness and in health, in sorrow and delight, in work and in recreation, we give to our children, God gives to us infinitely. All the education of mind and soul and imagination we try to provide for our children that we may rejoice in their becoming worthy men and women, God provides with intense minuteness, and with work that labours to the end of our perfection, for us His children. It is His duty, and He does it with an endeavour that never relaxes. The vision of everlasting evil, and, therefore, everlasting punishment, is fast disappearing from our theology. There is no Fatherhood of God if it be true, and Christ said that there *is* Fatherhood. If God is our Father, He must be so infinitely. All His infinite thought, life, moral character, and will, are transferred to His Fatherhood, and secure the absolute redemption of all His children, their final likeness to Himself.

This is, then, the God in whom we now believe through Christ, and the Christian belief goes back and takes into itself all the true belief of the earlier world in God. God is still to us the infinite thought and life and will and righteousness by which the material and spiritual universe consists; but in His relation to us as Father, He thinks for us, and lives in us, and wills in our behalf, and makes Himself our righteousness. Therefore we not only worship and reverence

Him, we also love Him. How? With all our heart and soul and mind and strength, with all the love of children. And now, in being loved by God, and in being able and joyous to love Him, our deepest need is satisfied, our deepest longing quenched. The very root of our heart is watered with the dew of this belief. God is love, and we love Him. It has transfigured all humanity. And that expanded and ennobled belief is the work of Christ. What wonder that He said, ‘Ye believe in God, believe also in Me.’

Still all this was not enough. There was one dreadful matter that stood between God and man. It was man’s own sense of his wrong-doing. Men knew that God was righteous, that His will was good, and that He was bound to do right. And they felt that they were always doing wrong, and that their wrong-doing divided them from God. And so deep was this strange feeling that one may say it filled the whole world. One of the most universal feelings in man is the sense of *sin* within himself, and, of course, with that, the sense of a righteousness without himself. The latter creates the former. Far more than half of the forms, sacrifices, ceremonies, of all the worship of the world are the result of this feeling—that, some way or another, man must get rid of doing wrong in order to get right with God. Now in trying to do this they assumed that God was angry with them, and wished to take vengeance, and that He must have personal satisfaction for sin—an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. Wherefore their one effort was to appease Him: to induce Him to

lay aside wrath. They invented sacrifices, tortured their bodies, and made long prayers. No one can count the host of dreadful things which were caused by the belief that God was always angry and longing for vengeance. Nor did any of these sacrifices make those who made them really good. All that men gave up, all the blood they spilled, all the tortures they inflicted on their own flesh, only took them away from the real matter—their own sin, their wrong desires and imaginations.

What did Christ do in this thing? How did He meet this universal difficulty? He told men first that they were wrong, that God was not fond of vengeance; that He was obliged to punish wrong, but that He did not do it in anger or in hate; that He wanted no sacrifices but inward and spiritual ones; that He loved us and desired our good, and only our good. There was no need to appease God to get Him to give up His revenge. He wanted only love from us because He loved us. We had nothing in the world to do but to open our heart to Him, to love Him because He was loving, holy, true, and beautiful.

That is strange, you say. What becomes of sin, then? How am I to get rid of it? Oh, do you not see that if you love all that God is—if you love goodness, and love, and truth—that sin must die within you? You cannot go on doing wrong when you love the right; you cannot in the depth of your heart, in your most secret thoughts, cherish wrong when once you love God. You have no reason any more to fear Him or hate Him.

Christ has told you that He is immortal love, pure fatherhood, to you. Who can fear Love; who can hate Fatherhood?

By one word Christ reversed all the previous religions. What man needs is a changed heart, He said, and the only way in the world to change it is to make man feel that God loves him. Fear and ignorance, and their child, superstition, perish then, and true religion rises, fair as God Himself. And when men asked How does God love, and how much? Christ answered not only in words, but with His life and in His death. God loves men as I love you—enough to die for my enemies, to forgive them who hated me, to never leave my bitterest enemy till I have persuaded him to give up hating me, and to turn to love me. How much does God love us? The infinite love of Christ has measured it for us. God loves us beyond all our conception. There is nothing which the imagination and passionateness of all mankind could think or feel which, taken altogether, could express the hundredth part of the love of God to us. As infinite as His thought and His life, so infinite is His love. It is not that He will not punish us—He must; but the punishment is done by love, for the reformation of the sinner; not in anger to satisfy His vengeance. Our whole life changes under that belief. It cuts away the very root of sin; it kindles love and joy, it enables life to go on labouring and conquering, it is the redeeming power of mankind. That is the teaching of Christ, and well indeed he said, 'Ye believe in God, believe also in Me.'

Then comes our relation to man. With this belief

in God, with these ideas at the root of our life, how we ought to look on our fellow men, and how we ought to work among them, is as clear as the day. If God is our Father, and we His children, then all men are brothers, and we are bound to live for them and work for them as such. If all men are brothers, then all men are as equal, and have as much right to the common gifts of the world as brothers in a household have. The only differences between men worth considering are made not by wealth, or rank, or position, apart from work, but as they are made in a household—by greater genius, industry, intelligence, and goodness. In all other matters, men are at one by Christ's revelation, and at one as brothers. The word itself contains the whole duty of man to man. And if you ask what sort of brotherhood, how much you are to love men, why, look for your answer to Christ. See Him pouring forth His life to save man. See Him spending His whole life in giving to men the ideas necessary for their progress. Therefore, you cannot, were you to labour night and day, do enough for men, you cannot do too little for yourself. Let all thought of your own life, your own fortune, your own success, perish in the thought of living for your brothers. That is the outward life eternal, and is what Christ revealed to us as our duty to mankind.

Lastly, if such be our belief in God, we must believe in our immortality. It is inevitable. God is infinite thought, infinite life. We think, and we live, and our thought and our life, in this belief, flow from, and are part of, that eternal thought and life. If our thought

or life could perish for ever, that which came from the infinite God could perish.

God is infinite moral character, everlasting truth, righteousness, justice, and love. God is infinite moral will. We have moral character, truth, justice, love, and will, and these are parts of that everlasting character and will; and if they perish, a part of God is dead, a portion of force is annihilated. If God be—that is impossible.

God is a Father who loves His children, and shall He permit His children who love life, and in whose soul He has implanted the love of life and of its continuance, to die for ever? It is impossible, if we believe in Him, for then He would be a liar to Himself. What! to give us thoughts that outreach eternity, and then to kill thought! To give us life that in the very hour of death believes in life, and then to quench it with a smile of mockery! To make us love righteousness and will to do it and at last attain it, and then to say—‘All your labour for good was folly, you shall be righteous no more and care for it no more!’ To give us love, love which lifts us into the infinite, and then to quench it for ever in darkness and nothingness! All this is the last absurdity. It is incredible folly, both in the intellect and in the spirit, to doubt for one moment, if there be a God, that human thought, and life, and love, and the delight of being good, continue for ever. God would not only not do this, would not destroy these powers in us—He could not do it without self-destruction.

Then, at last, the final vision rises before us. If

these things are true of God, and true of all men, then the time will come when the whole human race, now at one with God in idea and in hope, shall be made wholly at one with Him in reality, when, round the Father, all the children shall be gathered, perfect in His perfection, perfect in thought and life and righteousness and love, at one for ever with one another. It is a glorious end. It is the end of belief in God, and in Christ's message about Him. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye believe in God, believe also in Me.

[May 23, 1879.]

*THE PEACE OF CHRIST.*

‘Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.’—St. JOHN xiv. 27.

These are musical words, but the music is not of earth alone. They touch a strain above the world. In their consciousness of spiritual power, in their farness from the strife and trouble of men, they are of that true supernatural which abides in the secret of God. But in their tenderness for those who loved Him, in the sweetuess of expression which brought together in them human sadness and the Divine power which could so boldly promise peace and give it, they are of that exquisite quality which for ever moves the heart of man. Sorrow, power, and beauty meet and mingle in them.

Yet it was a strange legacy. He gave His apostles peace, Jesus said—but had they peace? Was their life a life of peace? Were their hearts at peace? Did trouble never touch them or the storms of life? Did sorrow, fear, and passion never make a tempest within them? Was His gift of peace the peace that the world calls peace? Indeed, it was not. It was given

as the world did not give, and it was not outward peace.

What was it? It was not peace from the outward pains that beset life. For Christ says that it was His own peace He left to them, and when He spoke the words all the storms that can befall a man gathered round His head. He had suffered long from slander, envy, jealousy, and hatred; and now a darker cloud was to break, and sudden betrayal, a people's anger, insult, torture, and death, were to spend their force upon Him. So, whatever His peace was, it was consistent with heavy misfortune. Nor were His followers better off than their Master. With the legacy of peace He left to them the legacy of tribulation. ~~'In this world ye shall have tribulation;'~~ and they had it. Theirs was a hunted life. If any men might be embittered, they might be. The Jewish and the Roman world, the Church and State, were alike against them. They were stoned and driven into deserts, tortured, thrown to the beasts, butchered to make a Roman holiday. It was not, then, the peace of an easy life Christ left them. On the contrary, He bid them, would they follow Him, expose themselves to the tempest.

Let no one dream, then, who follows Christ, that he will be saved from outward trouble. No; beyond the common trouble that befalls us all, His follower will have the troubles that come on those who go against the views and maxims of the world, who follow truth in a lying age, who cling to faith in an age of doubt, who live close to honesty when the standard of uprightness is low, to whom enthusiasm for things held worthy

of scorn is their greatest honour. Not peace, but war, storm, and the cross belong to those who receive Christ's legacy of peace.

It was not this peace, then. Was it freedom from the unrest of the heart, from sorrow and care, and bitter pain of thought and love? No, not that either; for it was my peace, said Christ, and He had not peace of heart. 'Now is my soul troubled; Father, save me from this hour.' Again, 'When Jesus had thus said, He was troubled in spirit and said, Verily I say unto you, one of you shall betray me.'—Afterwards, there came the lonely agony in the Garden, the bitter cry upon the cross. The peace of Christ was not peace for the troubles of the heart. On Him the restlessness we know so well abided; He suffered as we suffer—and it is well. For were freedom from these things *His* peace, we should have no certainty of His sympathy. The Consoler needs to have been the sufferer, and the conqueror of suffering.

Let no one, then, dream that because they are Christ's followers they will have peace from the sorrows of mankind; that loss will be less bitter, ingratitude's tooth less keen, treachery less a fire in the heart, broken love less miserable, a shattered home less lonely. Nay, we may have all these sorrows fully. And, indeed, to be His follower it needs that we should pass through many of these things that we may do His work, that, victorious over the sins of sorrow—not through feeling less pain, but through having felt it and gone into its depths and conquered it in His way—we may turn like Him to men and women, and give the power of our tried

experience to the task of consolation. It was not, then, the peace of the human heart that He had or that He left to us.

We have seen now what it was not. What was it, then? It *was* a spiritual peace, peace in the deep region of the human spirit, peace in that inner Life, which, striking its thoughts into eternity, is linked unbrokenly to God; nay, which is a part of God. ~~In that~~ <sup>This w</sup> deep Life there was entire and perfect peace ~~of~~ Christ. The storms of circumstances raged without. Sorrow and baffled love, and the pain of death, and the horror and weight of the world's sin, not imposed on Him by God His Father, but taken on Himself through sympathy and love of man, made a very tempest in His heart—but for all that, at the root of His being, in the eternal world of His spirit, where there were neither wars nor hatred, nor reached the violences of earth; where sorrow was not, nor any pain—peace, abiding, pure-eyed, deep as the heart of God, reigned unbroken. That was the one thing needful. Outward peacelessness of life would soon have its end in the realising of death. So also would the storms which blew upon His heart. A little while, and He would go to the Father. Then—when in the spiritual world, He rose again—the spiritual peace that beneath the storms of life and of the heart reigned undisturbed, rose from the depths of being, and overflowed the whole of His eternity.

It was spiritual peace that was His peace; it was that which He left to us. Can we define it? Not in the depths of feeling. There, it escapes analysis.

Those on whom its spiritual emotion descends at times as the dew of God's blessing know how it cannot be explained in human words. Nor when it has visited men and gone can they remember what it was. They are like those who have been blessed in a happy dream, but who on awaking forget the dream, but feel throughout the day its exalting passion. They cannot describe the perfect reality of spiritual peace, but the sweetness born of it distils and lives for many days within the heart.

Again, those who have felt it know that it does not bring the cessation or the destruction of anything capable of good in our nature, but rather exalts the whole nature into a quick life, in which all things act with harmony. It is, in fact, the harmony of the whole being under a divinely good will, which will is felt by us as unspeakable and personal love. Who can express the emotion of that peace? Can we tell in words what our hearts feel here on earth, when, after fruitless beating to and fro between good and ill, some one whom we love takes up our life, and by a will which we own as good leads our storm-tossed heart into the calm of righteousness? Can we express the intense peace we feel when we know that this human will is filled to the very brim with tenderness for us? Then much less can we say what our spirit feels when it is not only human but absolute goodness that we know abides upon us, and fills our will with its own power; when it is infinite love, which cannot change like human love, that pours upon us all its sunshine. No; this is the unutterable, the unspeakable, which Paul felt when he was caught

up into the third heaven. This is the joy that Christ possessed in His peace.

But we *can* say something of the actual things in which this peace consists, though we cannot of the feeling it creates.

It was, first, the peace that comes through fulfilment of duty. Christ had a mission on this earth from God—to reveal God and to save man. Now that death drew near, had one jot or tittle of this work been left undone, He could not have had this spiritual peace. But it was done; and the peace which He felt because of that fulfilment is expressed in the words given to Him in the Gospel of John: ‘I have glorified Thee upon the earth, I have finished the work that Thou gavest me to do, and now I am no more in the world, and I come to Thee.’ All was completed, and completed perfectly. He looked back, and the mirror of his work had not one flaw; He looked forward, and He knew the results of His work on mankind. It had been perfect; it would make perfect. Can you conceive of a higher peace than that which must have filled His heart? That which the artist feels of calm delight when, having given birth to a great conception, and laboured in it, without being false to it for an instant, and loved it at every step of his labour, and who finally, having wrought it out perfectly, sinks back satisfied, and knows that it will continue for ever to give inspiration and joy to man—is but a faint, faint image of the ineffable quiet of joy that filled the Redeemer’s heart when, abiding in the calm of duty done, He said, ‘Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you.’

Nor was it only in this hour near death that Christ possessed this peace of duty done. All through His life the same peace had prevailed. He had suffered, He had had desires, He had known our temptations. And had they been able to have had mastery, the spiritual peace of duty would have been touched with unquiet. There would have been war in His inner nature. But one thing over-rode all else in Him, and to this one thing bent all physical, intellectual, and imaginative pains and pleasures, all chance desires, all enthusiastic impulse. That one thing was the work and aim of His life which God had given Him to do. The government of this one thing made peace—the peace of the harmonious subjection of all the qualities and powers of His being towards one end ; the peace that comes of perfect concentration of the whole nature to a righteous end. Nor were these powers *forced* to do their work. It was not a tyranny which the will set towards duty exercised. The qualities governed towards one end were never in rebellion against the will. They knew the work which was to be done and recognised its glory ; they rejoiced and willingly threw themselves into it. Every capacity of Christ's being, acting each with its full power, and in subordinated harmony, rushed with delight towards the end to which His will directed them. If that is not peace—spiritual peace—what is ?

Such a peace does not, as I said, make peace in the affections of the human heart ; it does not prevent pain, sorrow, even agony ; but it subdues them to the point of not interfering with the duty of life, of not

intruding on the peace which consists in the harmony of all the elements of being brought together to do God's work. See how in the Garden we have this unrest of the heart and this rest of the spirit! 'O, My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me'—there is the struggling human heart—'nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done'—there is the dominating peace of the spirit at one with the will of God.

This was part of Christ's peace, and it is given to us. It may be ours at last. It seems too much to hope. Our duty is at war with pleasure that is wrong, and our will is divided against itself. That which, in an hour of high resolve, we sacrifice to God, an hour of wild passion brings back again. Love of place, or love of gold make us do the very guilt we most hate or fear. The love we give to man for Christ's sake we give back to ourselves for our own sake. We are pitiable beaten to and fro. Nor can we keep one single aim running straight to its goal. This impulse leads us to one desire, another to an opposite desire. Our energies are dissipated over a hundred aims, and warring wills and scattered powers permit not the peace of Christ. We can but wait and trust His promise, and, trusting it, never relax our effort towards that peace which shall be ours when we shall have but one aim, to do the will of God. We must never cease to strive so that when death draws near we may have the peace which can say, looking back on a life which, through much failure, has never been quite faithless, 'My Father, fulfil in Thyself what was wanting in my life. Let me say—

in Thee, and Thee alone—I have finished the work  
Thou gavest me to do.'

The peace of Christ was, ~~secondly~~, the peace that comes from the Triumph of love. It is in the depth of God's love that His peace is rooted, and in the depth of that life of His which love makes for ever. None of our anger with Him, none of our sins against Him, none of our rebellion and envy and hatred of Him—when, in ignorance of Him, we fight against Him—can change His eternal love to us. He does not let our sin escape Him; punishment falls on us through law, not through passion or caprice; for the root of the law is love. No storms, then, of anger, or jealousy, or revenge can enter into Him. He is only conscious of the profound, patient and intense tenderness which is always quietly at rest in knowledge of its own goodwill to man. That was the peace of Christ. Fulfilled with eternal love to us, He met with the devotion and love of a few, and even these misunderstood Him. From the many He met scorn, opposition, hatred, envy, jealousy. At the end, from friends he met betrayal and desertion, from enemies torture and death. Had He yielded to complaint, to pettiness, to anger; had He given back railing for railing as a personal matter; had He spoken even to the Pharisees in indignation for Himself and not for the cause of Man; had He not frankly forgiven the failure of friends, the pitilessness of foes, He had not been capable of feeling spiritual peace. But over all love rose triumphant as the sun above the clouds of storm. He lived in the region of perfect calm in which the love of God abides—and the

triumph of this love made peace. ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’

This, too, may be ours, if we love and forgive, and think nothing of self. What! shall the unquiet of revenge, of injured pride, of vanity which finds its food of restlessness in every glance, of envy that corrodes the heart, of jealousy that consumes the very body like a fire, of hatred that sleeplessly seeks its end, of scorn that cannot bear the quiet of its victim—shall these that hold rule so often in our hearts depart, driven away like foul birds from the spirit they keep peaceless? Yes, He has left His peace to us. It will, step by step, rule in our hearts. Born of love, it will be made greater day by day by love. We shall be able to give up ourselves. Our pride will pass into the glory of forgiving, envy and even jealousy be lost in the blessedness of sacrifice, hatred and revenge fly away when God enables us to say, I forgive as Christ forgave. We shall then have the peace of triumphant love.

It follows, thirdly, from this, that Christ’s peace consisted in conscious union with God. ‘I and my Father are One.’ He felt, amid a world which injustice, falsehood, and hardness of heart disturbed, entire union with the justice, truth, and mercy of a Being who loved Him as a Son. I take one of these as example of the rest—Peace from union with perfect truth. All around Christ raged a very storm of lies—hypocrisy, and blindness born of pride, confusion of the old with the new, battling opinions contradicting and denouncing each other, false ideas and false gods—Oh, do we not know it all too well? We cannot always find our anchors

in the storm of false and true, in errors that last because of their truth, in truth that fails because of its error. The very ground of our faith, the belief in God, sometimes trembles beneath our feet. A thousand opinions beset us, eager for our acceptance ; a hundred sects each claim the truth as alone in them ; the stars of our childhood's religion are hidden, and we drift rudderless over the ocean, now to this island, now to that, hoping in each new land to find repose—and find it not.)

← We might despair, did we not hear the wondrous tidings that one of us had peace—One too who lived in as great a storm as we. We know there is but one way in which He could have had it, for it is the only way in which we should be content ourselves to have it—in union with divine truth. For it is that we are bold enough—in true remembrance of our lofty origin—to ask for, to desire, to be unsatisfied until we find it. We demand to be at one with absolute Truth.

And that was the Divine glory of Christ the Man. He saw with unclouded eyes the very truth of things. He saw that which God sees. It is His unique declaration, a daring declaration, which no other teacher has ever made, which none would dare to make were it not true—that He was absolutely at one with God as Truth. ‘I am the Truth,’ He said, so strong was this conviction. He saw the roots of the vast forest of human life, and could understand the growth of the whole ; saw the goodness at the centre of evil ; saw the far beginning and the end of man, and of the struggle of man ; saw the finished web in which all the clashing

colours were at last in harmony, heard the full music of which we hear the discords—saw, and was the Truth. What wonder that He had peace? And because He had it, and was one of us, we will not despair, however dim and grim the battle in which we fight with phantoms. If one of us, our brother in humanity, had this peace, if He was at home in the very truth of Things, then we also may win Truth. We, too, may be at one with God; ‘My peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you.’

That is a joy which cannot be fulfilled at once. There is no absolute peace for us till we have fought our battle and conquered lies; but a part of it may become ours, and even now, as we grow older, more of it belongs to us year by year. Some things have been settled. Some faiths have become inwoven in our being. Some false things, some errors, have been exhausted and thrown by. Some doubts can never occur again. Christ is at the helm of the ship of life, and we know that, after a little while more of the tempest, we shall furl our sail and drop our anchor in the harbour of the Truth of God. Then shall we be glad because we are at rest—at one with the Truth at last.

This is something of His peace. And because it was not of this world, it was given not as the world gave. It was given for eternity. It implied then continued life, continued energy, continued work, continued individuality. Memory, thoughts, emotions, impulses, aspirations—all were to remain.

‘What,’ the world cries, ‘is that peace, must men

Leave all the war of life over again, men who are wearied even to death with the buffeting of fate, weary of self-repression, weary of self-indulgence, weary of work that does not satisfy, and of rest that does not soothe, weary of rolling up the hill those stones of thought that ever return again, weary of the whirling wheel of vain and cloudy passion, weary of aspiration that dies in self scorn, of knowledge and beauty that they only touch sufficiently to create a hunger of the heart that death cures at last, and cures well? Come to me, and I will give you rest, the silent unbroken rest of a death that knows no waking, the quiet of annihilation. Continued life cannot be peace—can be nothing but continued restlessness.'

And the world's promise might be considered if continued life were life under the baffling conditions in which we live it here; though even were they to last, I, for my part, would not accept peace at the price of never being able to know I was at peace—the peace of annihilation is not peace. Where there is no consciousness of peace, there is nothing of peace. But continued life, when it is righteous and vivid, is not weariness. In the peace of Christ all the storms that arise from the battle of the lower nature will be hushed to rest by the lower nature being lifted into goodness. The peace of God is righteousness, and it will rule the heart. Beneath its rule dies that war of life of which the world complains. The peace of God is loss of self, the loss of bitter craving, of restless vanity, of the hideous activity of decay—and the gain of love, and,

through love, of that beautiful and musical life that lives in the life of all that lives, and itself is utter joy. This peace then is active, at one with labour, and yet at one with joy. In our weariness here we think all labour must be identical with want of rest. But that thought is born of our weakness and our want of life. We do not really want inactivity, but power. That which wearies in labour and struggle is not the effort, but the want of spring; not the uncontented rush, but the want of life to make the rush. Our real peacelessness here is due to our not having life enough. Our greatest unquiet is not being able to conquer failure. The moments we have had most peace are those rare ones in which we have done, with power and joy, the work we loved. That peace—the peace of having noble conceptions, of loving them, of power to put them into adequate form, of joy and rapture in the seeing of thought take perfect form—in one word, of the fulness of contemplative and creative life—that will be the peace of the heavenly life that Christ gives, not as the world gives.

And to that some of you prefer annihilation. Very well, take your nothingness! Take the death of thought, the ruin of love! Take the vanishing of joy, the corpse of beauty, for your eternal bride! Take the corruption you desire! But we will prefer the life, and peace, and joy, and beauty, and love, and thought, and all these wrought into fulness of Life, that lie hid for us in our Saviour's promise, 'Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. In My Father's

house are many mansions ; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself ; that where I am there ye may be also.'

[Preached at Stratford, April 27, 1879, at the inauguration  
of the Theatre.]

*SHAKSPERE AND HUMAN LIFE.*

‘ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.’—JAMES i. 17.

THE prophet is not one who foretells what will be, but who declares what is true. And the truths he declares are not scientific or historical, but moral and spiritual. He reveals the principles and the laws which underlie, and give form to, the activity of God and man, and which rule the relation and reaction of these two on one another. And he is enabled to reveal these laws because he sees directly down to the roots of things by God-inspired imagination. He does not think or argue: he sees, and declares what he sees. Hence he is not called a Thinker, but a Seer.

Among these men, who have never been wanting to the world, the greatest have been the Jewish Prophets, for they have seen most deeply into the mind of God. But there have been other prophets, also inspired by God, who have declared the great ideas of the work of God and man, and who have seen straight into the secret places of the human mind. These are the great

poets. They bear with them a faculty by which they see, unblinded by the maxims and conventions of their time, the simple sources of the acts and feelings of mankind. Imagination is that faculty—imagination, another name for 'Reason in her most exalted mood.' And this faculty is itself the active power of love, of that passionate, spiritual, self-losing love of Man and of Nature, without which imagination cannot act, nay, cannot be born at all.

Of all our Poet-prophets of this kind, Shakspeare was the greatest. No poet ever loved, that is, ever lost his own individuality, more in mankind than he; therefore none have ever seen by imagination more clearly, more universally, more profoundly into the springs of human act and thought, into the motives and emotions that impelled act and governed thought.

He saw, in an age full of national prejudice and class-feeling, the common brotherhood of man, the unity of man, and yet realised and expressed the distinctions between men that are made by genius, and goodness, and culture. He saw, in an age when nations were natural enemies, that there was one nation only—the nation of mankind—and yet no one loved and honoured his own nation more. Without formalising these universal thoughts, without perhaps being conscious of them, he anticipated the work of the Revolution, and made the unity, the brotherhood, the equality of man, on certain large grounds of simple feelings, duties, and hopes, the basis of his whole work. And though he is touched, as had need to be the case, with the faults of his age, in thought, and especially in his

art, yet in comparison with his contemporaries he is scarcely touched by these faults at all. To his deep humanity he owes it that scarcely ever a worldly maxim, or a social convention, or a political prejudice interfered with his insight, corrupted his humanity, or deformed his page. He loved not the world nor the things of the world. He is our greatest prophet.

It is for these reasons that I support with pleasure any movement which brings Shakspere more on the stage in this country, and it is only on the stage that his work can be adequately felt and understood. And when I say that, I mean to support all dramatic performances which represent human action and emotion with truth, which tell or strive to tell the real tale of human life. The Stage ought to be one of the best means of education in a state, and it might be much more so than it is in England if the foolish and sometimes odious stigma laid upon it by religious persons were frankly removed, and a cultivated demand made for the representation of admirable plays. And a great deal has been done of late by the profession itself towards the regeneration of the stage, and done with so much quietude, resolution, and in the teeth of so much difficulty, that it makes it more imperative on the public that they should meet the actors half way, recognise the sacrifices they are making for the general good, and give them and the stage their true and rightful place as a means of refined culture and noble pleasure. When the body of actors declare that the truthful representation of human action and feeling is their aim, and that they put aside plays as unworthy of

acting which do not answer to that definition, they are then taking their place as educators; as men and women whose business and pleasure it is to develop, quicken, and exalt certain high faculties of the soul.

The proper object of Tragedy is, 'by raising pity and fear, or terror, to purge the mind of those and such like passions; that is, to temper and reduce them to just measure with a kind of delight, stirred up by reading or seeing those passions well imitated.' The object of Comedy is, by representing human nature in its happier moods, to lift the mind above the tragedy of life; to balance sorrow by joy; to relieve, by 'mirth that after no repenting draws' the weary weight of the world. It is by exhibiting the charm of true love, the beautiful and joyous forms of domestic and social feelings, the variety of human character in the manifold action of common life, and the movements of the age in which we live—to awaken new interest in humanity, to take us away from self by stirring our pleasure in the lives and fortunes of others, and indirectly, through all these things, to moralise the soul.

These are noble arts, and give a noble pleasure, and in giving that pleasure they educate. The Stage, while it is true to these aims, is one of the first of professions, and the genius and talent which devote themselves to this work, and are able to perform it, are inspired by God, and beneficial to man. To none more than Shakspere was given by God the power of representing truthfully, in Tragedy and Comedy, the mighty Drama of Humanity. Having been the Prophet,

he was, also, because he was the artist, the educator of men.

And now, in his birthplace, his work is being enshrined in the best way: the building of a memorial, the founding of a theatre and library, by his own river, among the meadows where he loved to walk, in the town whither, after his former life in the great city, he returned to dwell and to be buried, is one of the right and beautiful things to do—worthy of that English spirit, too much decayed of late, which rejoices to do honour to men who have been great otherwise than in statesmanship, arms, and science. and I am happy that I have seen it done.

Milton may say—

‘What needs my Shakspere for his honoured bones?’

True—he needs no monument—but we need to express our reverence and our delight and our gratitude, and for that this memorial is set up. Cavillers may blame this movement, and question its utility, but it matters little whether the thing be useful in their eyes or not. If it is a beautiful thing to do, and answers to the desire of Stratford to honour her noblest citizen, it has a higher than any material use. Men may say a theatre for acting Shakspere had better be in London, and a great Shakspere library in a big town. Let them say their little say, and let their words drift down the wind. It is right that Shakspere should be acted in his native town, that men should be able to read about him here, that his citizens should mark their just pride in his presence, and in his love for his own place; that they

should say, in whatever way they like to say it—Shakspeare belongs to mankind, but we sheltered his childhood, engaged his manhood, and enshrine his bones.

He began here and he ended here ; but between his birth and death, what a varied life was led ! It takes into itself almost all the great motives of the heart, and in thinking of that life for a little this evening, we shall find some lessons not perhaps unfitted to this place where God is worshipped.

The first is in my text. Shakspeare's gift was of God, his genius was inspiration. We are told that only certain men are inspired. Hence arose the fatal distinction made between sacred and profane work, and hence the way in which the Stage, in old times, was shut out from God, and counted irreligious. What wonder that it became what it was counted to be ? We have a higher thought now. The sacred writers were inspired ; but all true work, all noble art, and all true lives, are wrought by Him who is the Father of light, and beauty, and thought. In every profession and business our Father is. All places may be the gates of Heaven. There is no work which is done in love to Man, and to God, the Father of Man, which can be called profane. Think of that, you who read Shakspeare, and you who act him. You are reading and acting words done by inspiration of God. When you read him with intelligence and ardour—the intelligence and ardour are of God. When you interpret his work nobly on the stage, you do it by inspiration of God. That is the first lesson—the direct lesson of the text.

The second is the religious duty of self-development.

Shakspeare gave himself with all his heart to all the influences that bore upon him. We know, from his afterwork, how closely he observed nature in the woods of Charlecote, in the forest land round Stratford. The flowers, the animals, the trees, the streams, and all their ways, were studied. And when his genius drove him to London, he already knew what was to be the work of his life, and made ready for it by as ardent a study as that he gave to nature. He turned his hand to anything. He was the *factotum* of the stage. There was no pride, no foolish dignity ; all he wished for was to learn his business ; and he brought finally the whole world of the time into it.

He let all the outward life of the city, from the Court down to the apprentice and the watchman, play upon him ; and yet he kept the individuality which enabled him to use as his own all the varied materials. He took his inspiration from other countries, from Italy, from the stories of the North, and yet he wrote with the greatest fire and love of the history of his own land. He made himself at one with the practical business of making wealth, with the real world of life around him, and yet he could live, when he pleased, in Faery land. He lived among all ranks of society, in a dissipated and serious, a religious and irreligious time, in a world of intense romance and base commonplace, and yet he kept his head always clear, his name unsullied, his religion clear, his judgment true, and his hands clean.

He loved passionately, and he made deep friendships ; and knew the best and the worst emotions of both ; he

even threw himself into the hazardous politics of the time for the sake of friendship—if it be true that he sympathised with the enterprise of Essex. Yet he did not forget his burgher father, nor his people, nor his wife, nor the homely English desire to make a household for himself in his native village.

He realised in that violent, passionate, youthful, varied, and romantic society, where men, in Elizabeth's middle period, seemed to live always in extremes, the terrible depths of love and jealousy, of hatred, and sorrow, and ingratitude, and pride, the failures and ruins of life—and yet so balanced his soul, partly by inward effort, and partly by the relief of expressing these passions in his characters, that he could at the end throw off all the weight and woe, and come forth calm to live a quiet life in the country, to continue his work in the spirit of gentleness and kindness to man; nay, more, at the age of fifty to be as romantic and more romantic than a boy.

It is impossible to think of these things without learning the lesson Christianity impressed upon the world—the lesson of self-development, and the way of it. We are taught that we ought to grow, not only in one, but in all parts of our nature; to educate every faculty we possess, so that we may be equally developed and perfect men. We are told by such a life as Shakspeare's to keep our eyes and our hearts open, to observe and watch nature and man with delight and love, to fix within us what we observe; and then to use these materials for our natural work in the world. We are taught to sympathise with all classes of men, and all

forms of human action, to enter with eagerness into all kinds of human feeling; to live in other nations as well as in our own. We are taught to live in the movements of the world and of society, and yet above their worldliness; to lose ourselves ardently in all their interests, and yet not to let any one interest so rule us as to kill the others. We are taught to keep a balance in life, so that when age comes we may have power to rest without the loss of happiness, power to lay by work and enjoy the world without the decay of interest in the world. We are taught to share in all outward life, and yet within to have self-reverence, self-knowledge, and self-control. And finally, we learn to develop ourselves as a religious duty. For only when we do it religiously can it be done without a diseased self-consciousness. For when we conceive our life and our work as given to us by God, and our self-development as a duty we owe to God, who wishes us to be perfect that we may fulfil not only His idea of us, but His idea of the work we have to do for our brother men; then, and only then, we are lifted wholly out of the realm of self-consciousness. That is to make self-development religious, and the wonderful and unique absence of self-consciousness in Shakspere has always made me feel that there was this abiding sense of God at the root of his life.

Through all that I have said, I am now led to the third lesson to be drawn from his life: 'that God is the Educator of men.'

In a great man's life, in one especially who was so human as Shakspere, we ought to possess a broad

sketch of the large lines of the interests and changes of human life. And such is the case. His youth was full and gay ; he loved with the impetuosity of youth, and he married young. When he left Stratford, pushed by the natural ardour of genius, and knowing nothing of the seriousness of life, the first thing that the varied humanity of London awoke in him was satire of its social follies, the Comedy of its Errors, and the Loss of Love's Labour. Then he passed from this phase, and the stories of Italy and perhaps his own life led him to write of the passion of love in its youthful warmth, and its swift tragedy in Romeo ; and when that was over, of love as the Dream of a Midsummer Night. And then he left the dream behind, and a more manly passion filled his heart. The new and splendid greatness of England, fresh bathed in victory, touched him deeply, and, like the Prophet he was, he threw the strong patriotism of all Englishmen into the historical plays. And now, having attained manhood, and a larger view of the breadth of life, he poured forth all the Comedies that play with Love as the mischief-maker of the world, and yet also of Love as that by which, when it is true, men become wise. He came to see that the perfect life of love is in a married life of gracious peace, mingled with such friendships as that of Antonio for Bassanio.

Then came a further change as his manhood grew towards its afternoon. The solemn aspect of the world now succeeds the joyful one. His comedies touch on tragedy, and he writes of the disillusion of life. 'Measure for Measure' is all one gets in this world ; and he changed the title of his earliest comedy—'Love's

Labour Won'—into the graver and half satiric phrase, 'All's Well that Ends Well.' Then the shadow deepened into storm. He loved and was betrayed by love and by friendship; his dearest and noblest friends were exiled, sent to the Tower, or beheaded; and amid the ruins of his house of life, he sat stunned for a time, and all the world and all its worth seemed like a dream. And in this shadowy land he wrote 'Hamlet.' But he soon awoke from his dreaming, and then found himself in the depths of the darkness of humanity. He saw the terrible woes of the world face to face, the fate and horror made by the unbridled passions of men, the madness of the people; and in 'Lear,' 'Othello,' 'Macbeth,' and the rest of the great tragedies, he told what he felt. Like Dante, he went down to visit hell, but when we think him lost to joy, lo! who is this that issues forth like Dante, out of the brown air, again to see the stars? Where is the worn and shipwrecked man? Here at Stratford, in the quiet country, and with peace like that of the country in his heart. The storm is gone by, and it is in the calm sunset of life that he walks again through the meadows and tells his Winter's Tale of love and reconciliation, of Thais saved from the storm and Marina from crime, of Imogen refinding love that had been lost, of the Tempest that passed into peace, of Ariel set at liberty, of Prospero laying down his magic arts that he may rest, and asking that he may be relieved by prayer from evil ending—

prayer,  
Which pierces so that it assaults  
Mercy itself and frees from faults

That is the end. Such as it is, it is a general sketch of human life. Youth, passion, interests of manhood, disillusion, storm, peace, and death. And it is almost impossible to think of it without feeling that this was not made by the man or by his circumstances alone. We at least, who believe in God, have a sense of an education being in such a life, of a mighty and loving Father who trained his creature through the discipline of early joy, through the discipline of human interests, through the discipline of sorrow, through the discipline of peace ; and then said—Come, home to me. Yes, home to God ; for, face to face with this almost infinite activity and with its incalculable results, we rejoice in the assurance of immortality. We learn, from the story of that wondrous life, the education of men by God for an immortal work.

And now, thinking of the latter part of his life, we win a further lesson for our own lives. Sad and terrible woes like Shakspere's come upon us often in the afternoon of life. How do we meet them ; what result have they upon our character ? Sometimes wonderful fame, the applause of the world, such as fell to his lot, is ours. How does it, in after-life, affect us ? We may live, like him, in the very midst of a full and intense society, in the heart of a worldly life. What are we then, when we are old ? Sometimes our love is ruined, our friendship betrayed, as were his. What is then the temper of our mind towards mankind ; do we rescue life from this shipwreck ? The brightness of life passes away ; disillusion throws its grey veil over the beauty of the past, our ideals die ; and God sends

thunder and hail and the tempest to devastate our life. When we have suffered disillusion, when the storm has gone by, what is our strength? is it wrought into manly tenderness and forgiving calm? Out of these things Shakspere came forth all gold. Fame did not spoil his heart. The world did not make him unable to enjoy the stillness of the Stratford woods, nor the rustic society of the little town. The betrayal of love and friendship only wrought in him forgiveness, a gentler love of men and women, a wiser and calmer view of life. The ghastly woes of men, the tempest of their passions, made him think, not of despair, but of all-healing, all-subduing love. Disillusion had been his, but he shook its chill off his heart, and looked once more on a new world, and made it brighter by the brightness of his own heart. He loved still, and he believed in love and wrote of love—and most wonderful and most beautiful of all!—in his later years, *Romance*, the old romance of youth, chastened and softened by experience, but even more beautiful for that, was born again, and he saw *Perdita* love among the sheep farms; and in the faery-land of the ‘*Tempest*,’ *Miranda* knit her heart to *Ferdinand*. It is a great lesson to us all. So may it be with us! so may we conquer life, and win out of it, by the power of God, the peace that Shakspere won! Then came silence on his life; the silence of three years; years, if one may judge from the Epilogue of the ‘*Tempest*,’ which he gave to peace and prayer. For all through his work, the note of unobtrusive religion, and of honour paid to the spiritual love of God, faintly but clearly sounds.

And now in the still evening, it may be on the anniversary of his burial, we bid our thoughts of Shakspere's life on earth farewell; and in the church where he worshipped, and where he chose his resting-place, we think of him in God. There he abides who did so much for the world; there, in God, his work continues, eternal in God's eternal life. His presence is with Him who gave him inspiration. But with us also his presence is. I wonder how many have seemed, as evening fell, to see his figure pass through the street, and by the river, and enter the church, so vivid is he with us still. But whether we seem to see him here or not, he abides, a presence and power in the hearts of men, eternal in the eternity of art. And his art brings us back also to God, the great artist, until, thus lifted from creature to Creator, and finding all our thoughts of Shakspere end in God—we cry, rejoicing and content, with the Apostle: 'Every good gift and every perfect gift cometh from above, from the Father of Lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.'

April, 1879.

**THE SEARCH FOR GOD.**

‘Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as Heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?’—JOB xi. 7, 8.

IT is in the eighth century before Christ that all careful criticism leads us to place the composition of the book of Job. It is written in Hebrew, but the philosophy and the speculation contained in it are not distinctively Hebrew. They are rather Semitic than Hebrew, belonging to the whole of the tribes that surrounded the Jews. Among these none was more famous for its philosophic school, as one may almost call it, than the Idumæan tribe of Theman, to which one of Job’s adversaries belonged. And it is this ancient wisdom of Idumæa, and all its speculations on the problem of life, which is handed down to us in the book of Job. ‘Rome was not born; Greece had some singers, but could not write; Egypt, Assyria, India and China had grown old in politics, religion, and philosophy when the sage to whom we owe this book wrote for the human race this debate on the eternal problem of good set over against

evil, around which all nations have struggled, suffered, doubted, and believed.'

It is strange how unchanged that problem is. The same questions into which it divides itself for us, presented themselves to the Idumæan of nearly three thousand years ago. No work of ours seems able to solve them, and yet no work has ever been greater than that which men have given to them. Every man and woman capable of thought has laboured upon them, and laboured on them with a passion which they always, by a strange necessity, as it were, themselves enkindle. It has been intense work for thousands of years. And yet no sure reply has been found. No one has answered with certainty the question why, on this earth at least, good has to fight with evil; why, if God be good, He permits us to be the willing or unwilling victims or fighters of evil. Christ Himself gave no full answer to the problem. He knew, I have no doubt, the answer, but it was not part of His work to tell it, and He thought it right not to tell it. What He did say was this—Believe in God your Father, and live my life in the spirit in which I live it, and you will find the answer for yourselves. He did not act like a good despot who removes the difficulty and saves his subjects work and pain. For His object was not to make us good by an outside force, but to help us to make ourselves good by our own labour. Therefore, face to face with the problem of evil, He threw us on faith in God and on love for man, and made us feel that in working on these grounds we must ourselves find the answer. He showed us the way to do the

sum; He did not do it for us. Nor did He even promise that we should find the answer in this life; on the contrary, He gave us clearly to understand that the full answer could only be found in another world and another life. That was the result of the greatest Teacher's thought upon the subject.

So not only have we the problem of evil and good, and why evil is, to solve, we have another question to answer first, why, given the problem, we cannot find it out, why we are kept in darkness? Why has God treated us so? and since He treats us so, is He good, or does He exist at all? Or if He exists, does not this unutterably strange thing that a good Being should condemn us to this sorrow and pain when He might relieve us, prove that He has but little to do with us, that He is for ever unknowable by us?

One answer given to that by men who are weary with the subject is this. The problem of evil and good set in array against each other does exist, and the only way to find the answer is to meet the evil fairly in the face with the opposing good, and to work the evil out of the world for the sake of human happiness. That is what we can do. As to the other question, Why God has allowed evil, and why we cannot find out what He means, it is not a question worth considering. It is not, indeed, a real question at all. It has come out of the dreams, and fears, and fancies of men who grew into the notion of a great Being outside of us, and persist in clinging to that notion. Could men but get rid of it, or at least lay it aside as impossible of solution, they would not be tormented into idleness,

and they could do their real work against evil twice as well.

That is an agreeable theory, but its one crying mistake is that it ignores facts. It hides its head, as the ostrich is said to do, in the sand, and says, 'I have nothing against me; I do not see anything.' The plain fact is that all mankind do ask that question, and that there never was a time when men have not been disturbed by it. The moment thought begins to work in the child of civilised parents it rises as if by instinct. The moment a savage nation advances out of mere brutality into conscious thought and feeling, it springs up among them, and craves for a reply. It is absurd to say that it ought not to exist, for it does exist, and no theory of life that ignores that factor in the whole problem can be a theory worth working on as a foundation.

The Christian theory says that there is one solemn and difficult question for every man to answer before he can do work against evil and for good which may endure—'Why cannot I in this life find out the problem of evil and good, why has not God thrown clear light upon this thing?' And the theory goes on to say that there is a mighty and loving Being, whose object is to educate us into a likeness to Himself, and that for that purpose He has given us a difficult problem to solve, in order that through our thought and work upon it, certain powers called spiritual, and destined to play a great part in another world, and which are the powers by which we draw near to God, may be trained and developed to do their work in that other life.

When that is done, and the climate of life changed in the fuller life, and by reason of the fuller life itself, the question will be answered, and the problem that follows on it—the problem of evil, solved. The theory then declares that the undiscoverability of the answer to the question here is a means of education, and prepares us for finding the answer in another life.

That is at least an adequate theory. It does not ignore the facts of human nature, it gives a worthy explanation of them, and a vast mass of men and women, taking it as the ground of their work, have wrought magnificent work against evil, and have themselves so far explained the problem of evil as to be able not only to live their life in an active and noble manner, but even to rejoice in it and to die rejoicing.

In truth, we are like the chrysalis, if we suppose it gifted with a conscious intelligence. Faint motions come to it within its sleeping frame; its limbs, its wings, strive dimly to extend themselves; dreams come to it, through its physical changes, of another life, dim suggestions of some wonderful new birth; yearnings after something which it calls freedom and light and beauty and movement. They deepen, and at last one day the shelly case falls off, the insect queen appears, and in the opened wings, and the swift flight, and the flowery food, and the blue sunlight in which it moves with joy, all the problems which disturbed but enkindled it are lost in the splendour of their answer.

But the answer presupposes God and a relation of God to us as an Educator for a life with Him; and

whether it be true that we can know Him in any manner and realise Him as one who has to do with us in a good way, has always been the first question of the problem. That is the main question of the book of Job, and it is turned over again and again in the debate between Job and his friends. One portion of it comes before us to-day in the scornful question of Zophar to Job—‘ Canst thou by searching find out God ? ’ and it will be of some interest to see how the ancient sage who wrote the book made Job answer it.

Zophar says, ‘ Canst thou by searching find out God ? ’ It is the one cry of the present day on the lips of those who have given away their faith. If there is a God, He is as high as Heaven, unreachable. What canst thou do to find Him ? Nothing ! Give it up, and attend to what lies before you, to that which you can do. If there is a God, He is as deep as hell. What canst thou know of Him ? Work your brain to shreds and you get no answer. You have not the power to know Him. He is (if He is) the great Unknowable—and Zophar and some of our philosophers grasp hands in agreement across the gulf of ages.

The question made Job burn with passion. Over three chapters in alternate hope and despair, but always with fierce intensity, turning and returning his thoughts, but always reasserting against his woes his unconquerable knowledge of God, his unconquerable trust, Job’s reply spreads itself before us. It seems at first sight to have little arrangement, and the impetuous torrent of words mixed with personal outbursts of feeling, conceals at first the thoughts ; but it has the logic

of the heart ; and if we read it with something of Job's wild emotion, its arrangement becomes clear at last, till out of the words, when once the arrangement is found, the thoughts rise luminous as stars.

The question is—Can a man find God ?

Look at Nature, that is Job's first cry. ' Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee, and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee ; or speak to the earth, and it shall learn thee, and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this, in whose hand is the soul of every living thing and the breath of all mankind.' They all tell of One who has wrought them. We cannot see them without saying, ' A great intelligence is here.' Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this ? Who knoweth not ? he asks in wonder. I know by my own intelligence that a working intellect is there. Intellect knows intellect. I have designed, I have planned, I have thought, I have created. And I know the marks of design and plan and thought and creation when I see them. They are here in the world, and God is here. Then, further, wherever I look, I see life. In the whole universe there seems to move a soul ; in every living thing, in all mankind, I see its vivid and plastic stress. Where does the life come from ? Who gave it beginning, what is the source of instinct or imitation—of growth and decay, and growth out of decay, in all living things ? ' I answer,' cries Job, ' that is God the Lord.' There is a vast independent, operating source of life that gives life to, and lives in, the life of

all that lives. Here are his words—‘In God’s hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.’ Can I by searching find out God? Yes. I look for Him in nature, and I know Him there as Intelligence and Life.

And we—with all our additional knowledge has this argument lost its force? No, not one whit. Accept evolution as much as you like, and I accept it—still, where we find design we predicate a designer. Where there is evolution, and in an order, there has been the idea of it, the reason which thought it as the idea by which all life should develop from change to change; and where there is such thought, such reason, beyond myself, seen, felt, and moving through all the universe—*there is God, He is.*

When I think evolution, I predicate its having been thought; where I find life in a thousand forms, I predicate a central life. Before a fortnight has passed by, spring will be fully among us, and we shall make one pilgrimage at least to the woods. In what a rush of life we shall find ourselves. Stand still an instant, listen and look. On the skirts of the wood a hundred larks are in the sky, breaking their little throats with rapturous song. Every tree has its families of birds, and all are thrilled and thrilling with life, and singing with its joy. A million million leaves have burst their buds, and shake themselves loose to drink the air and light. The flowers cannot contain the prodigality of their desire to be beautiful, and the whole wood is alive with the insect world at work. Keep silence, and you will hear all things grow, and

the low whisper of their delight in life. Everywhere there is a very passion of movement, a rapture of being—and we ourselves feel it, feel it racing through the veins, kindling in the brain, making itself into feeling in the heart. What mighty spirit is here, moving everywhere? Who lives in this life, loves in this love, thinks in this growth, feels it all in me! God, God the Lord; who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?

That is his first reply, and it may well be ours.

Then Job passes on. Look now at Man, he cries; see the changes of the world, the breaking down and raising up of men; wise men turned fools, bonds of kings loosed, the mighty overthrown, deep things brought out of darkness, nations increased and destroyed, enlarged and straitened again. Who has done this? Man himself alone? The one clear thing in it all is that Man is proved to be the creature of another's will. The one thing that is clear is that human wisdom is made folly, and human power weakness, and human foresight vain. The one thing that grows forth is that beneath all these changes there is a mighty will, independent of Man, moulding the nations. It is He whom I have found in Nature, God the Lord. It is He that increaseth the nations and destroyeth them, that enlargeth them and straiteneth them again. Not know Him! Lo! mine eye hath seen all this.

There is character in the work, and I read that character. By searching I find Him out, not in Heaven or in Hell, but here on earth, among mankind. And

the character I see is one of mighty goodness. I do not understand all I see, but what I do not understand, what seems evil and awry, I take on trust on the ground of that which I do understand. You say I cannot know God. Forgers of lies, I can.

And we, has this argument no weight with us? Look back on the last thirty years. The tyranny of Naples lasted long, and seemed as strong as hell. It went with a touch into ridicule and ruin. 'God loosed the bond of kings.' The kingdom that all men despised in Europe but a faithful few, which men said had no resurrection force in it, which had been trodden down of tyrants till it seemed as if it had neither blood nor bones, rose into life in a few years, rushing through blade, and stalk, and leaves into noble blossoming with a swiftness unequalled in history—and Italy is one of the great powers of Europe. 'God enlargeth the nations.' The great slave-holding states, with whom was strength, men said, and wisdom, whom most men here thought well of, in whose victory most men believed, was broken in a bitter war to fragments, and God 'brought out to light the shadow of its death.' The great French Empire, its stones made compact with the blood of its own citizens, and its strength made perfect in the enslaved thought of its people, a rich and gorgeous palace of sin and fraud, struck by the German hammer, fell into a heap of hideous ruin, and with its ruin rose into national unity and strength the divided peoples of the German name; and France herself, freed from her curse and shame, rose again into a stately people.

We shall see more yet, ere we die. A mighty will is working in Europe, and all the armaments of kings will not prevent its righteous doing. Truth, justice, freedom, will work their way. 'God increaseth the nations and destroyeth them.' Yes, we look back, and there grows out of all we have seen (as there grows out of all history) the sense of a mighty will without us, who moulds the fortunes of mankind, in large and noble lines, towards truth and justice and freedom and progress. What is that will? It is His whom Job saw. As each successive triumph of the right emerges, we break out into faithful joy, 'We praise Thee, O God. we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord.'

Then Job turns to the personal question, the question pressed upon him by his dull and meddling friends who in his trouble began to preach to him. 'Look at your sorrow,' they said, 'look how God has smitten you. Your suffering proves God's anger, and it proves your present sin. Reconcile, if you can, your righteousness which you maintain, with the fact of your punishment.' Or, as some would put it now, 'Good, you have been smitten to the dust, treated like a sinner. There is therefore no good God; or, if there be, you cannot know what He means.'

How does Job reply to this double-shotted argument? One text shows what is passing in his mind. He has gone over in himself what he has said before. 'I have seen Him,' he thinks, 'in the creation, and loved His ways there. I have felt Him in the play of Providence among mankind; and now that I am myself, in that providential play, crushed in heart, and home, and body, shall I say

He is wrong?' 'No,' he breaks out. 'God slays me, I have lost all hope.'<sup>1</sup> Yet I will defend my conduct, face to face before Him. To see Him is to die (he believes the opinion of the East that to see God was death). But the hypocrite can never see him. If I am then a hypocrite, I shall not die, for I shall not see Him. But I am not a hypocrite, I am just and true. I will then claim to see Him and die. Better death than not to see Him. My death at least will prove that I am true.' That is, he throws himself in a passionate despair of trust on God. I have nothing else to look to, and I will cling to that, no matter if death come. And he does cling to it, and mean it.

What does it then mean when we, like Job, have that feeling, and it is a matter of daily experience to find it among men—to find men crushed, but determined to trust God? It must mean to them that there is a God who is worthy of their trust. For there is no other possible cause that they can conceive for the feeling. Their whole life, their misery, the cruelty of their life, the undeserved nature of their misery, would lead them to say, 'There is no good Being who cares for me.' On the contrary, in the very teeth of evidence, they cry out of the depths of the soul: 'There is a just God. He slays me, I have lost all hope. I will come before Him and die. In my very death God will say I am just, and that He knows it.' And Job, and we, feeling that, can out of our hearts reply, 'Can I by searching find out God? No, I find Him without a search,

<sup>1</sup> This is the true translation of 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.'

not in Heaven, not in the depths of Hell, but here in the passionate answer of my heart to his existence.'

And with regard to the other part of the argument which spoke of the absurdity of Job's saying that he was righteous when he was so smitten by God, and if he was righteous, what could anyone know of a God who, good Himself, acted so strangely as to smite the righteous —Job's answer was just as bold and just as strong: 'I will,' he cries, 'maintain my cause before God. I know I am righteous. My cause is just, and I know God will justify me. In spite of all that seems to prove I am wrong, in spite of all the opinion of men about the proof of my being wrong which my misery affords, I am right, God knows that I am righteous.'

Well, what does that mean for us when, against the view of all our friends, and in the very face of the seeming wrath of God shown in our suffering, we declare (as many men have done) that we know our cause to be just, and ourselves blameless? It is, that we have known God for ourselves, that we have found Him in ourselves. We have appealed to the invisible Judge, heard His sentence in our hearts, and known His presence. 'Canst thou by searching find out God?' cries the sad or the scornful friend; 'all your shattered life says you are nothing to Him nor He to you.' 'Hold your peace,' you say with Job, 'let me alone; in the secret answer of my own soul to myself, I know the voice of God my Friend.'

Then comes a strange passage, steeped in the stormy passion of his wretchedness. Though he has found God in the sense of his own rectitude, and denied with force

the argument that because he suffers he is sinful, yet this argument presses him home.

In one of those swift changes of front that men in utter misery make, he repeats the very argument used against him. He has answered that part of it which said 'that he could not know God in the midst of his misery.' But the other part remains. 'I am right,' he cries; 'goodness has been and is mine. Why, then, does God afflict me? What explanation is there of His conduct? Have I lost Him in this seeming failure of justice? If He is unjust, there is no reason for His conduct to me which will justify Him as The Just, I have no God. Searching, I cannot find Him out.' To this question he must also find an answer that will enable him to say, 'I know God.'

With a strange mixture of boldness and self-pity, of impassioned anger and humility, he replies to this question. He fancies himself before God, and challenges Him to answer. 'He has taken his life in his hand,' he says. He is resolved to die, if need be, in urging his defence, and cries that there is nothing left for him to do but to maintain his conduct before God. Nothing can be more dramatic. 'Hear my words,' he says to God, 'lend Thine ear to my declaration. I am ready, I have ordered my cause, I know that I shall be justified. Is there one in the world who will take the opposite side against me? If there be one, I will keep silence and die.' And having thrown this challenge to all the world to deny his righteousness, he turns again to God. 'Spare me only two things, O God, then will I not hide myself from Thee. Let not Thine hand crush me,

let not Thy terrors terrify me. Then accuse me, and I shall answer, or let me speak, and Thou shalt answer me. Tell me the number of my crimes, make me know mine iniquities.' He pauses then after this daring question—supposes that God is confused and has nothing to say, 'Wherefore,' he breaks out, 'hidest Thou thy face, that is, as if ashamed from me?' Then, as if struck with some fear at the boldness of his speech, he drops into an appeal for pity. 'Why dost Thou treat me as an enemy? Wilt Thou frighten a leaf driven by the wind, wilt Thou pursue the dry stubble?'

In all this wild and daring pleading there is no answer to the cry of his heart which desires to find God right. At last an answer breaks upon him. 'I am not guilty now,' he thinks, 'but I have been guilty in old times, and this dreadful misery of mine is God's punishment of my early sins. For Thou writest bitter sentences against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth. For *that* Thou hast put my feet in the stocks, for that Thou spiest out all my ways, for that Thou drawest a trench around me, miserable! me, consumed like a rotten wood, like a garment that the moths have eaten.'

So he speaks. There is then an explanation. He has searched, and found God, and justified Him, without ceasing to justify himself in the present. Out of the depths of suffering, and against his own past, he brings forth God in His moral power, the Righteous Lord. God is still just, and I know Him still.

We may think what we like of the answer he makes to himself. If he speaks, as he seems to do, of sins

done unconsciously while he was a mere child, it is an answer the ground of which was the superstitious view that sins are imputed as sins to those who cannot know what evil or good is. But though in that case the ground of the argument was wrong, the main answer itself was right—God is just in all His ways. But if he meant early sins of his youth of which he was conscious, he was right in his view, for punishment is not taken away because of repentance or goodness. Job might be the saintliest of men in the present; the punishment of the past would still be exacted. We reap what we have sown. But though the natural punishment endures, it is felt by a good man not as anger, but as love, and then all its moral sting is taken away. That is the true forgiveness of sins. Even Job, in his awful suffering, felt no remorse whatever, and felt God as his Friend. ‘I am punished,’ he might have said, ‘but I have not lost my God. He is still just, and that is the only thing I want, the only thing for which I care.’

What then we think of the reasonableness or no of the answer does not matter. The thing that does matter, the thing to dwell on, is the intense pursuit of God, the intense resolution to keep Him, the way in which in the midst of Job’s suffering he feels that all is lost if he lose God; if he cease to know that He is, and that He is just. For that is the saving element in life. You may be beaten out like corn and driven like the chaff, and angered to the heart; you may arraign God before the tribunal in your own heart, challenging His justice, bitterly doubting His love. In the end, there is but one true salvation in your ruin, to believe

Him, in the very teeth of evidence, to be utterly and absolutely just. If there is an eternal, unchangeable, just One, we may well bear any punishment, and we can even in the very stress of it forgive our punishment. It fortifies the whole soul to know that there is a just God. To lose that knowledge is to have no security in life, no certainty against sin, no anchor in the storm. To keep it is to have that within which in the end will heal the heart, without enfeebling it on one side, without hardening it on the other. And Job found it so at last.

Look back now, on what we have followed in Job's heart. It has been a great inward battle on which we have looked—armies of troubled thoughts, mingling with one another. One thing we have seen throughout, the intense will of Job himself to keep God as his God, and this will dominates the battle. One thing comes forth clear in the end. I, Job, a miserable, broken man, know that God is, and that He is mine.

Can man by searching find out God? Yes! There is no need to seek Him in the unreachable heavens, or in the depths of the invisible darkness to look for Him. He is here in the life, and intelligence, and beauty of nature. He is here in the conduct of the world. He is here in the sense I have of my own righteousness before Him. He is here in the sense of an absolute justice, even though that justice punish me. He is here, O God, how deeply, dearly, how intensely, in my undying, unquenchable trust that He is mine and I am His forever.

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